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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the educational circumstances of Aboriginal students in inner city high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It is based on a literature review and interviews with Aboriginal high school students, Aboriginal school dropouts, adult members of the Aboriginal community, and teachers. Results indicate that there is a cultural/class/experiential divide between Aboriginal students/families and the school system. The life experiences and cultural values of many Aboriginal families differ significantly from what they experience in schools, which are run largely by non-Aboriginal, middle class people for the purpose of advancing the values of the dominant culture. The educational system marginalizes Aboriginal students and does not adequately reflect their culture and realities. The incidence of overt racism is high. There are few Aboriginal teachers and little Aboriginal curriculum content. Many Aboriginal students resist and reject this form of education. This is viewed by the dominant culture as a problem of Aboriginal students failing in school. The school system then works to raise Aboriginal students to the level of the superior culture. Aboriginal people assert that they want the education needed to participate fully in Canadian society and their own self-governance, but they do not want to abandon their culture to do so. They believe that the educational system needs to better reflect the community's rapidly changing demographics. (Contains 176 references.) (SM)

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Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba

Aboriginal Education in Winnipeg Inner City High Schools

by Jim Silver
and Kathy Mallett
with Janice Greene and
Freeman Simard

December 2002

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Aboriginal Education In Winnipeg Inner City High Schools

By Jim Silver and Kathy Mallett

with Janice Greene and Freeman Simard

Acknowledgments:

We particularly want to acknowledge the important contribution made to this study by Leslie Spillett and Ardythe Wilson of Mother of Red Nations Women's Council of Manitoba, and Betty Edel of the Community Education Development Association. We are grateful to each of the many people who agreed to be interviewed and to participate in focus groups: Aboriginal students, school leavers and adult members of the Aboriginal community, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, and numerous interviewees at the University of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and the provincial Department of Education. For their contributions in a variety of other important ways, we are grateful to: Kristine Barr; Harvey Bostrom; Louise Chippeway; George Desnomie; Doug Edmond; Ken Gibbons; Loa Henry; Lori Johnson; Yatta Kanu; Darren Lezubski; Michael Mackenzie; Astrid MacNeil; Larry Morrisette; Todd Scarth; Helen Settee; Lisa Shaw; Byron Sheldrick; Leon Simard; Tom Simms; and Norma Spence.

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Executive Summary

In this study we investigate the educational circumstances of Aboriginal students in Winnipeg inner city high schools. The study is based on interviews with 47 Aboriginal students in Winnipeg inner city high schools, 50 Aboriginal school leavers, 25 adult members of the Aboriginal community, and 10 teachers, 7 of them Aboriginal. In addition, we conducted an extensive review of relevant literature.

Responses by Aboriginal people to our questions about their experiences in school reveal the existence of what we have identified as a cultural/class/experiential divide between Aboriginal students and their families on the one hand, and the school system on the other. The life experiences and cultural values of many Aboriginal students and their families differ significantly from what they experience in the schools, which are run largely by non-Aboriginal, middle class people for the purpose of advancing the values of the dominant culture. The educational system marginalizes Aboriginal students, does not adequately reflect their cultural values and their daily realities, and feels alien to many Aboriginal people. The incidence of overt forms of racism—name calling and stereotyping, for example—is high. Institutional forms of racism are common. The face that schools present to Aboriginal students is decidedly non-Aboriginal: for example, there are few Aboriginal teachers, and little Aboriginal content in the curriculum. These characteristics suggest to us an educational system that continues to be overly Euro-centric and even colonial—a concept that we elaborate upon in Part Two of the paper.

What Aboriginal people have said to us about the educational system is *not* that Aboriginal people should be forced to change in order to fit into and 'succeed' in school, but rather that the educational system needs to change.

Aboriginal students experience the divide between themselves and the school system on a daily basis, and a good deal of what they experience in school is negative. Not surprisingly, many Aboriginal students resist and even reject this form of education. This is not the way in which this issue is generally understood. It is generally understood as being a problem of Aboriginal students failing in school, of their having a 'dropout' rate double that of non-Aboriginal students. But what follows from framing the issue as being Aboriginal students' failures in school is that it is the Aboriginal students who need 'fixing', and this inevitably leads back to the thinking that drove the residential schools, which is that Aboriginal culture is inferior, and that Aboriginal students must be 'raised' to the level of the superior culture. This approach has simply not worked. Aboriginal people do not and will not accept these racist assumptions. They resist such assumptions, and thus resist schools.

The evidence that we have gathered suggests to us that Aboriginal people want the education that is needed to enable them to participate fully in Canadian society and in their own self-governance, but they do not want to abandon what it is to be Aboriginal in order to do so. What Aboriginal people have said to us about the educational system is *not* that Aboriginal people should be forced to change in order to fit into and 'succeed' in school—this is what the residential schools attempted, unsuccessfully, to do—but rather that schools and the educational system generally need to change in order to better reflect the rapidly changing demographic and cultural realities of our community.

Making such significant changes will be a challenge, but the benefits to all of us in doing so will be significant. We conclude the paper by advancing recommendations that arise directly from what our interviewees have told us. These are recommendations that we consider to be reasonable and achievable, and which we believe are necessary for beginning the process of change that needs to take place in our educational system.

Part One

1.1 Purpose of the study

In this study we investigate the educational circumstances of Aboriginal students in Winnipeg inner city high schools. It is known that the educational system in Canada was designed by and for people of European descent. It is also known that historically schools were central elements in Canada's strategy to assimilate Aboriginal people. There is a long history of antagonism between Aboriginal people who wish to maintain their culture, and a school system designed to reproduce a different cultural system. Our purpose is to examine the current circumstances of Aboriginal people in high schools in Winnipeg's inner city—an area with the highest concentration of Aboriginal people in any Canadian city—to determine what problems exist and what changes are warranted.

The educational system marginalizes Aboriginal people, does not adequately reflect Aboriginal peoples' realities, and feels alien to most Aboriginal people.

This study has been undertaken in cooperation with two community-based organizations, Mother of Red Nations Women's Council of Manitoba (MORN) and the Community Education Development Association (CEDA), and has been funded by the University of Winnipeg's Community-University Research Alliance program, the Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance, and by a University of Winnipeg Major Research Grant. MORN, established in 1999, is engaged in political action and advocacy for Aboriginal women in various areas, including education, and in building capacity and leadership for Aboriginal women. CEDA is an inner city community development organization established in 1979 to serve the social and economic needs of the inner city, and communities with inner city characteristics, by helping communities to enhance their collective problem solving abilities and to work together to bring about positive change.

A distinctive feature of this study is that it is based primarily on the views of Aboriginal people. By Aboriginal people we mean people who are status and non-status Indians, Metis and Inuit, and who have self-identified as such. We have interviewed 47 Aboriginal students attending high school in Winnipeg's inner city; 50 Aboriginal school leavers; 25 adult members of the Aboriginal community; and 10 teachers. All but three of the 132 interviewees are Aboriginal. The interview questionnaires were prepared in consultation with our community partners, MORN and CEDA. Three of the four authors of this study are Aboriginal people. Most of the interviews—including all of the interviews with students and school leavers—were conducted by the three authors who are Aboriginal. Our intention has been to attempt to gain an Aboriginal perspective on the educational circumstances of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg's inner city.

The study proceeds as follows. In Part One, after setting out the purpose of the study, we summarize data showing demographic and educational trends for Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, describe the methods used to select those people whom we interviewed, and then categorize and analyze the results of the interviews. In Part Two we discuss colonialism and its impact on Aboriginal people, and especially the impact of a colonial educational system on Aboriginal people, and then consider the issues of Aboriginal teachers and teacher training, and Aboriginal content in the curriculum. In Part Three, we draw conclusions and advance recommendations that follow from our findings.

It is significant, we believe, that what we learned from the interviews with Aboriginal youth and adults was largely consistent with the findings of a great many others who have considered the issue of Aboriginal people and education. The educational system marginalizes Aboriginal

people, does not adequately reflect Aboriginal peoples' realities, and feels alien to most Aboriginal people. In the past, education was consciously used as a means by which to force Aboriginal students to assimilate in order to fit into the dominant, European-based culture. It did not work. Many Aboriginal people resisted assimilation. Our findings suggest that many Aboriginal students continue to resist, and even to reject, an educational system that still does not adequately reflect their realities. We believe that Aboriginal people want the education that is needed to enable them to participate fully in Canadian society and in their own self-governance, but do not want to abandon what it means to be Aboriginal in order to do so. Many Aboriginal people operate from a different set of cultural assumptions than those of the dominant, non-Aboriginal culture. An example is the concept of non-interference in the raising of children, which can appear to people in the dominant culture as if parents are being neglectful, when in fact it is a cultural difference. Such cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings. These differences are not accepted nor even acknowledged in many schools, thus widening the divide between Aboriginal students and their families, and largely non-Aboriginal schools.

What we believe emerges from the results of our interviews, and from our analysis of much other literature on Aboriginal people and the educational system, is that it is not Aboriginal students who need to change to fit into the still very Eurocentric, even colonial, educational system. It is the educational system that needs to change to reflect the realities of, and to meet the educational needs of, Aboriginal students. This is a big challenge. But it can be done. And it should be done.

1.2 The size and growth of the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg's inner city

Manitoba has a relatively large Aboriginal population, and it is growing more rapidly than the non-Aboriginal portion of the province's population. The same is the case for Winnipeg, and for Winnipeg's inner city. Further, the Aboriginal population is considerably younger than the non-Aboriginal population. The numbers, the growth rate and the age structure all have important implications for education.

First, consider the provincial numbers. According to 1996 Census of Canada data, Manitoba has a higher proportion of Aboriginal people, 11.7%, than any other province. Saskatchewan is the only other province that is close, at 11.3%. The province with the third highest proportion of Aboriginal people is Alberta, at 4.6%, followed by British Columbia, at 3.8%. And Manitoba's Aboriginal population has been growing rapidly, as shown by Table One:

Table One: The Growth of Manitoba's Aboriginal Population, 1981-1996

	Number of Aboriginal People	% of Mb.Population
1981	66,280	6.5%
1986	93,450	8.7
1991	116,200	10.6
1996	128,680	11.7

Source: Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p. 14.

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Winnipeg has a larger Aboriginal population than any other Canadian city. According to the 1996 Census there were 45,750 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, which is "...far more than any other Canadian city" (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p.12). Winnipeg's Aboriginal population has grown rapidly, especially since the 1960s. The 1951 Census identified only 210 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg. Ten years later, in 1961, there were 1082 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg. In the 1960s Winnipeg's Aboriginal population grew by almost 4000, to 4940 by 1971. In the 1970s more than 11,000 Aboriginal people were added to Winnipeg's population, bringing it to 16,575 in 1981. Almost 20,000 more Aboriginal people were added to Winnipeg's population in the 1980s, so that by 1991 there were 35,150 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, and by 1996 Winnipeg's Aboriginal population had grown again by more than 10,000, to 45,750 (see Table Two).

Table Two: Aboriginal People in Winnipeg, 1951-1996

	Number of Aboriginal People	Increase During the Period
1951	210	
1961	1082	872
1971	4940	3858
1981	16,575	11,635
1991	35,150	18,575
1996	45,750	10,600 (5 years only)

Source: Statistics Canada, various years.

As of 1996, Aboriginal people constituted 7% of Winnipeg's population. More than one-third, 35.6%, of Manitoba's Aboriginal population lived in Winnipeg in 1996. Projections made by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg put Winnipeg's Aboriginal population at 67,000, or just under one in ten (9.8%) of Winnipeg's total population, in 2001 (Lezubski, 1998).

Within Winnipeg, the Aboriginal population is disproportionately concentrated in the north end and inner city, and thus falls primarily within the purview of Winnipeg School Division No. 1. A recent federal government study reported that: "While 4% of Canadian families are Aboriginal, the figure rises to 11% for Manitoba, and 28.4% for Winnipeg (School Division No. 1)". The community served by Winnipeg No. 1 is home to approximately 60% of Winnipeg's Aboriginal population (KSI Research International, Inc., 2001, p.14). In the north end and inner city, Aboriginal people comprise more than 20% of the population in 14 different Census tracts, according to the 1996 Census, "...a concentration not found elsewhere in Canada" (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p. 12. See also Richards, 2001). This will continue to be the case, since just over one in four (27%) of the children aged 6 years and under in the geographic area served by Winnipeg School Division No. 1 are Aboriginal (Lee, 2001, p. 7).

Winnipeg has a larger Aboriginal population than any other Canadian city.

The Aboriginal population in Manitoba is considerably younger than the non-Aboriginal population. In 1996, 20.1% of the non-Aboriginal population and 37.7% of the Aboriginal population were under the age of 15 years; 40% of the non-Aboriginal population and 64.5% of the Aboriginal population were under the age of 30 years(Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p.29). The younger age structure of the Aboriginal population is attributable to a birth rate twice that of

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the non-Aboriginal population. The result is that almost one-third of Aboriginal people in Manitoba are in the primary and secondary school age population, compared to less than one-fifth of the non-Aboriginal population (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p. 29), and in certain inner city schools, a majority of students are Aboriginal. This situation will not soon change. The high birth rate of Aboriginal people together with the large numbers of young people "...aging into their reproductive years, guarantees that Aboriginal birth rates will remain extremely high in Manitoba for several decades to come" (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p. 32).

The conclusion that we draw from these data is that in Manitoba generally and Winnipeg's inner city in particular, a large and growing proportion of elementary and secondary school students are Aboriginal, and this will continue to be the case into the foreseeable future. Based on 1996 data, over the next decade one in five people in Manitoba reaching working age will be Aboriginal. Some estimates put this ratio at one in four, or even one in three, by the year 2015 (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p. 29). Thus meeting the educational needs of Aboriginal people is exceptionally important for the future of the province and the city.

1.3 Aboriginal educational attainment:

The proportion of Aboriginal youth in Manitoba who are attending school, 44.1%, is lower by far than any other province.

The educational system is not now doing well in meeting the educational needs of Aboriginal people in Manitoba and in Winnipeg. Considering people in Manitoba between the ages of 15 and 29 years, 1.9% of those who are non-Aboriginal and 12.4% of those who are Aboriginal have less than a grade 9 education. Aboriginal people in that age range are six times as likely as non-Aboriginal people to have less than a grade 9 education. Non-Aboriginal people in Manitoba in that age range are twice as likely as Aboriginal people to have a high school diploma: 33.7% of Aboriginal people in Manitoba in that age range and 62.7% of non-Aboriginal people have completed high school (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p.53). According to calculations done by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg in 1999, using 1996 Census data, approximately 50% of Aboriginal youth in Winnipeg aged 18 to 24 did not have a high school diploma, compared to just under 20% of non-Aboriginal youth aged 18 to 24 in Winnipeg who did not have a high school diploma (Lezubski, July, 1999). So non-Aboriginal people in Winnipeg in the 18 to 24 age range in 1996 were approximately two and one-half times as likely as Aboriginal people to have completed high school.

This is partly attributable to the relatively low proportion of Aboriginal youth in Manitoba who are attending school. The proportion of Aboriginal youth in Manitoba who are attending school, 44.1%, is lower by far than any other province (Table Three).

Table Three: Proportion of Aboriginal Youth (ages 15-24) Attending School, Selected Provinces

Manitoba	44.1%
Saskatchewan	50.5
Ontario	55.9
Alberta	50.0
B.C.	51.6
National Average	50.4

Source: Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p.57.

So Manitoba, the province with the highest proportion of Aboriginal people in Canada, is the province with the lowest proportion of Aboriginal youth attending school.

Similarly, 1996 data show that the proportion of Aboriginal youth aged 15-24 years in Manitoba who are neither attending school nor employed nor participating in the labour market is higher than in any other province (Table Four).

Table Four: Proportion of Aboriginal Youth Neither Attending School Nor Working/Participating in the Labour Market, by Province, 1996

	Neither attending school nor participating in labour market	Neither attending school nor employed
Manitoba	27.4%	37.5%
Saskatchewan	26.3	35.3
Quebec	21.5	32.0
B.C.	16.2	27.2
Ontario	16.0	25.3

Source: Canada and Manitoba, 2002, pp 58-59.

Aboriginal people in Manitoba are less likely than non-Aboriginal people in Manitoba, and much less likely than Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan, the province with the next highest proportion of Aboriginal people after Manitoba, to have graduated from university. In Manitoba, 2.9% of Aboriginal people 15 years of age or older have completed a university degree; in Saskatchewan 7% of Aboriginal people aged 15-34 have completed a university degree. The higher rate in Saskatchewan has been attributed to the "...long term presence of Aboriginally-oriented institutions of higher learning in that province" (Canada, 2002, p. 55). In Saskatchewan, educational institutions controlled by Aboriginal people and specifically designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal students have resulted in much higher graduation rates than in Manitoba, where fewer such institutions exist.

These data—on the growth rate and age structure of Manitoba's and Winnipeg's Aboriginal population, and on levels of educational attainment by Aboriginal people in Manitoba—reveal a problem for Manitoba's economic future. It has been argued that 70% of new jobs will require post-secondary education or training. Therefore, the "...educational profile of today's Aboriginal youth is of crucial importance to the province's economic future" (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p. 53). Yet Manitoba is lagging in doing what has to be done to get Aboriginal people into post-secondary education, even when at least one in five and perhaps as high as one in three labour market entrants over the next 15-20 years in Manitoba will be Aboriginal. Investment in appropriate Aboriginal education in Manitoba is therefore an investment in Manitoba's economic future. We put the case in this fashion because the recommendations that we make in this paper will require that governments make additional expenditures. We believe that, over and above what we consider to be the intrinsic merits of what we recommend, and their virtues from the perspective of social justice, such expenditures would also make good economic sense. Indeed, we would put the case more strongly. Failure to make the necessary expenditures in Aboriginal education would be a failure to take the steps that are necessary to secure Manitoba's economic future.

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Another way to make this case is to look at some estimates of the cost to society of students leaving school before attaining their high school certificate. One Canadian estimate is that "...the cost of allowing 11,000 poor youth to leave school early over a 20 year span was $23 billion in lost income and productivity, $9.9 billion in lost taxes, and $1.4 billion in unemployment and social assistance payments (McCluskey et al, 2001). An American study reported that those who leave school without a high school certificate "... experience higher rates of unemployment, receive lower earnings, and are more likely than high school graduates to require social services over their lifetime...". The study estimated that one year's cohort of early school-leavers from Los Angeles city schools "...cost $3.2 billion in lost earnings and more than $400 million in social service" (Rumberger and Larson, 1994, p.142. See also Catterall, 1985).

Failure to make the necessary expenditures in Aboriginal education would be a failure to take the steps that are necessary to secure Manitoba's economic future.

1.4 Methods by which we selected those whom we interviewed

This study is based largely upon interviews with Aboriginal people, and a large majority of those interviews were conducted by Aboriginal people. We interviewed 132 people, of whom 129 are Aboriginal. Interviewees included: 47 Aboriginal students in Winnipeg inner city high schools; 50 Aboriginal school leavers, 26 of whom had previously left school and were enrolled in an adult learner centre at the time of the interviews, and 24 of whom were not in school; 25 Aboriginal community members with an interest in educational issues; and 10 teachers. We also conducted 6 focus groups, attended by a total of 29 interviewees, one each with the two categories of school leavers, two with community members, and one each with students and directors of adult learner centres. The interviews and the focus groups were conducted in May, June and July, 2002.

The interview questionnaires were prepared in consultation with our community partners, CEDA and MORN. Separate questionnaires were prepared for each of the five broad categories of interviewees: students, the two categories of school leavers, community members and teachers. The questionnaires received ethics approval from the University of Winnipeg Department of Politics Ethics Committee, and the University of Winnipeg Senate Ethics Committee. We sought but were not successful in gaining the support of the Board of Trustees of Winnipeg School Division No. 1 for the study, although the School Division was generous in making available to us some useful data, and Mr. Doug Edmond, Director of Research, Planning and Technology, reviewed our questionnaires and made numerous useful suggestions, almost all of which we incorporated into the final questionnaire. All interviewees read and signed a consent form, which informed them of the purpose of the study and of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Those interviewees under the age of 18 had their consent forms signed by parents or guardians. Each person interviewed, with the exception of the teachers, was paid a $25 honorarium as an expression of our appreciation for their giving us the benefit of their time, and an acknowledgment of the value of their knowledge. Each interview lasted between one and one and one-half hours.

We selected interviewees by a combination of methods.

For the students, we used a quota sampling method. We determined that we would interview at least five students from each of six Winnipeg inner city high schools, and that we would interview roughly equal numbers of male and female students. We attained the names and phone numbers of selected Aboriginal students from individuals associated with three of the high schools, and we interviewed all of those people whom we could reach and who were agreeable to being interviewed. We then used a combination of snowball sampling and postering to identify students at the other high schools. Snowball sampling involves asking intervie-

wees for the names of other students who fit our criteria, and inviting those people to be interviewed. We also put up posters around some of the high schools, explaining the purpose of the study and inviting those who fit the criteria to contact one of the interviewers. We then interviewed those who phoned and who fit the criteria until we had filled our quota.

For school leavers, we used a modified quota sampling method. We determined that we would interview roughly equal numbers of school leavers now in adult learner centres, and not now in school, and that roughly equal numbers would be men and women. Interviewees in the first category are drawn from five adult learner centres, although the majority are from one adult learner centre. Interviewees in the second category—school leavers not now in school—were identified by means of a version of convenience sampling and postering. Our interviewers went to two downtown locations where we believed Aboriginal school leavers might be found, and approached individuals to determine if they were school leavers who were not now in school, and if so, whether they were agreeable to being interviewed. We also used snowball sampling—asking interviewees for additional names of people who were school leavers not now in school—and we postered in these areas, asking people who had left school before completing high school and were not now in school to contact the interviewers. We interviewed those who phoned and who were school leavers not now in school until we filled the quota.

To select the 25 community members to be interviewed, we started with a list of members of the Aboriginal Education Coalition—a coalition of individuals concerned about Aboriginal educational issues—made available to us by CEDA, one of our community partners. We started with this list on the grounds that, based on their involvement with the Aboriginal Education Coalition, these were people specifically interested in and presumably knowledgeable about the issues we were investigating. We interviewed most of the people on this list, which got us about 75% of our quota of community members. The remainder were identified by asking respondents for the names of other community members who fit our criteria—in this case Aboriginal adults interested in and knowledgeable about educational issues.

The 10 teachers interviewed included 7 Aboriginal and 3 non-Aboriginal respondents. Some of these teachers were identified for us by the provincial government's Native Education Directorate, others by a snowball technique. We had intended to interview 25 teachers, but many teachers whom we approached were not agreeable to being interviewed because the study had not been endorsed by their employer, the Board of Trustees of Winnipeg School Division No. 1. Most of those teachers we did interview are not now teaching in a Winnipeg inner city high school, and some of them were interviewed without the use of a formal interview questionnaire. As a consequence we have not tallied the responses of teachers in the same way that we have for students, school leavers and community members.

1.5 A profile of those we interviewed

High school students:

We interviewed 47 high school students[1], 22 women and 25 men, at least 5 of whom were from each of the following inner city/north end high schools: Children of the Earth, Daniel McIntyre, Gordon Bell, R.B. Russell, St. Johns, and Sisler. Forty-one of the 47 are between the ages of 15 and 18 (2 were 19, 2 were 20, one was 21 and one was 34 years of age). Sixteen of the 47 students were in grade 11, 15 were in grade 10, 10 were in grade 12, and 6 were in grade 9. The girls are slightly younger, on average, than the boys (See Table Five).

[1] We interviewed 50 students, but 3 of the interviews have not been used at the request of the Principal of one of the high schools. These three students were interviewed in the school. When we subsequently did not get the approval of the Winnipeg No.1 Board of Trustees for our study, the Principal asked us not to use them, and we complied with this request.

Table Five: High School Students, By Sex, Grade and Age			
	Male	Female	Total
Grade: 9	1	5	6
10	8	7	15
11	9	7	16
12	7	3	10
	25	22	47
Age: 15	1	6	7
16	5	6	11
17	6	5	11
18	9	3	12
19	1	1	2
20	1	1	2
21	1	-	1
34	1	-	1
	25	22	47

Just over one-half of the students interviewed (54% of males; 52% of females) live with a single parent or guardian, usually a single mother. Just over one-third of the students (38% of males; 33% of females) have lived in both Winnipeg and rural Manitoba or Ontario while attending school. Just over one-half have attended 4 or more schools in Winnipeg—almost one-quarter have attended 6 or more schools in Winnipeg. This suggests a high degree of mobility, both between Winnipeg and rural settings, and within Winnipeg. This is consistent with what Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has found (WSD No. 1, 1997/98, Appendices, Tables 6, 7 and 8), and is consistent with the findings of a recent federal/provincial study: "Annual moving rates in some inner city districts exceed 70%" (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, p.13). Moving so much—starting and stopping at one school after another—is likely to have a detrimental effect on educational attainment. A 1990 study by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg of 116 renter families with school age children in the Dufferin and William Whyte school catchment areas in Winnipeg's inner city concluded that: "The study results confirm the belief of inner city educators that poor housing conditions impel families to move frequently which, in turn, adversely affects their children's school performance"(Social Planning Council of Winnipeg,1990, p.v). A 1995 Manitoba Health study reported that:

> Migrancy (frequent movers) is a particular problem for inner city children....Migrancy combined with poverty, single-parent families and other social difficulties further exacerbates the difficulty of school-aged children. In

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> a 1992 review of inner city schools, the lowest migrancy rate (proportion of children moving per year in the school population) was 40.6 percent. The highest rate was 84.7 percent....Some children have been in 13 schools by 11 years of age....In a nine-month period in 1992/93, there were 3,058 single parent family moves out of a possible 3,553 (Manitoba Health, 1995: pp107-108).

We also found that just over one in four of the men (27%) and one in three of the women (33%), have at least one parent who attended a residential school, while more than half (57%) of the students have at least one grandparent who attended residential school. We consider this to be a significant finding. As will be described later, the residential schools have had a devastating effect on Aboriginal people and families and have, not surprisingly, created in the minds of many Aboriginal people a thoroughly negative perception of formal education. The high proportion of high school students with a parent and/or grandparent who attended residential school makes clear that for a significant proportion of Aboriginal students in Winnipeg, the effects of residential schools are not just an historical phenomenon, but are present daily in the home.

...residential schools have had a devastating effect on Aboriginal people and families and have, not surprisingly, created in the minds of many Aboriginal people a thoroughly negative perception of formal education.

The fact that just over one-half of our high school interviewees live with a single parent, just over one-third grew up in both Winnipeg and rural Manitoba or Ontario, just over one-half attended four or more schools and almost one-quarter attended six or more schools, and between one-quarter and one-third have parents who were in residential schools, creates a profile of living arrangements and family background quite different from the average non-Aboriginal high school student, and quite different from the majority of teachers and staff.

School leavers:

We interviewed 50 Aboriginal people who are school leavers. Of the 50, 26 are women and 24 are men. We interviewed 24 school leavers who are not now in any formal educational setting (10 women; 14 men), and 26 who left school at some previous time and are now enrolled in an adult learner centre (16 women; 10 men) (See Table Six).

Table Six: School Leavers, By Sex and by Current Educational Status

	Not Now in School	Adult Learner Centre	Total
Male	14	10	24
Female	10	16	26
Total	24	26	50

A profile of these 50 interviewees in terms of their ages, the age at which they originally left school, the highest grade attained at the time of leaving school, the percentage with children and the percentage who are single parents, and their mobility, is shown in Table Seven.

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Table Seven: School Leavers, by Age, Living Arrangements and Mobility				
	Women		Men	
	Not in School	Adult Ed.	Not in School	Adult Ed.
Age:				
range	16-61 yrs	18-38 yrs	16-33 yrs	19-54 yrs
median	22	22/23	22	35
Time of leaving school:				
median age	16/17	16/17	17	16
median highest grade	9	9	10	9
Children/living arrangements:				
% with children	60%	81%	57%	30%
average number children	2.7	2	1	1
single parents	30%	63%	-	-
Mobility:				
% moved 3x or more last 2 years	50%	50%	14%	-
% lived Wpg. & rural while in school	30%	44%	50%	60%

The median age of those not now in school is 22 years. For the men in adult learner centres it is 35 years. More then 4 in 10 (42%) of the school leavers are 25 years of age or older. The median age at which they left school is 16 or 17 years, and the median highest grade achieved at the time of leaving school is grade 9, except in the case of men not now in school for whom it is grade 10. Roughly 6 in 10 of those not now in school have children, although men in adult learner centres are less likely to have children(30%) and women in adult learner centres are more likely to have children (81%, just over 4 in 5). Women have more children than men, on average, and the women are more likely than the men to be single parents. Just under one-third (30%) of the women not now in school are single parents, and almost two-thirds (63%) of the women in adult learner centres are single parents. This is consistent with the finding, reported below, that a desire to create a better life for their children is a strong motivator for women's returning to school at an adult learner centre after previously leaving school as a teenager. The women are more likely than the men to have made frequent moves in the past two years, while the men are more likely than the women to have moved between Winnipeg and a rural setting while in high school.

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Community people:
We also interviewed 25 Aboriginal community members, 19 women and 6 men. These are people who have a direct or indirect interest in educational issues. A majority are members of the Aboriginal Education Coalition. Ten of them are directly involved in education in various capacities. These include, for example, a school counselor, a university Aboriginal student advisor, two senior education administrators, and a fifth-year Faculty of Education student. Eight work with community organizations, many in the inner city and/or directly with inner city Aboriginal youth. Three are elders, and the rest include a policy analyst, an administrative assistant, a homemaker, a real estate agent and a political advisor. Two of these interviewees have Masters degrees, 11 have Bachelor's degrees, and an additional seven have at least some university education. All but one have children and/or grandchildren attending school; 18 of them (76%, or just over 3 in 4) have children or grandchildren attending school in Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

1.6 Parental Support

We found that there is strong parental support for our sample of high school students. All but three of the students (93.5%) told us that their parent(s) or guardian(s) encourage them to do well in school and care about how well they do in school and would be disappointed and/or angry if they were to leave school. Almost three in four of the parents/guardians (73.9%) meet with their children's teachers to monitor their progress. The parents of these Aboriginal high school students care about their children's educational success.

It is notable that just over one-third of the students (36.2%) report that at least one of their parents has attended either university or college, and just over one in four (28.3%) reported that at least one parent had completed grade 12 but not attended post-secondary education. When combined, almost 2 in 3 (64%) of these students have at least one parent who completed grade 12 and/or attended university or college. Since 38.2% of the Aboriginal population in Manitoba had grade 12 or better, and 10.6% had some university or had completed a degree (Canada and Manitoba, 2002, pp 53, 55), the students we interviewed have parents who, on average, have higher levels of educational attainment than the Aboriginal population generally. This is consistent with findings in the *Youth in Transition Survey*, in which more than 22,000 Canadian youth aged 18-20 years participated. The *Survey* found that "...the higher the level of the parents' education, the more likely their children were to complete high school" (Canada, 2002, p.30). The same has been found for Aboriginal students (Hull, 1990, p.3; Mackey and Myles, 1989, p. 147). Students are more likely to stay in school and to graduate if their parents graduated.

...many Aboriginal parents do not feel welcome in the schools, and/or have had bad experiences in the past with schools.

However, when we asked our community respondents, "Do the parents of Aboriginal students get involved with their children's education as much as the parents of non-Aboriginal students?", all but one (95.2%) said no. When we asked why that might be so, we were told that many Aboriginal parents are simply struggling to survive, to make it from day-to-day economically. "The daily struggles are so great", said one respondent. Another added: "Parents are stuck in survival mode". Providing the supports that young people need to be successful in school is extremely difficult in such circumstances. Further, we were told that many Aboriginal parents do not feel welcome in the schools, and/or have had bad experiences in the past with schools. For many this is the legacy of the residential schools. But the evidence suggests that it is more than that. One respondent said: "There are cultural barriers, racism, unbalanced power relations". When we asked the community respondents, "Do you think the school makes Aboriginal parents feel welcome", all but three (87.5%) said no, and many added that schools need to try different things to involve Aboriginal parents, and to overcome the

cultural and class barriers that divide schools/teachers, and many Aboriginal families.

Some might ask whether this is simply a case of Aboriginal parents not caring how well their children do in school. Our evidence suggests that Aboriginal parents do care. For example, when we asked those of our interviewees who had previously left school, "When you were in school, did your parents or guardians encourage you to do well in school?", just under 4 in 5 (78%) said yes. Their comments reveal that in many cases their parents were not able to provide as much tangible and emotional support as would have been desirable. This may, in some cases, be attributable to the cultural norm of non-interference in the raising of children (Cleary and Peacock, 1998). But whatever the explanation, their parents cared enough to encourage them to do well in school. This conclusion is consistent with a considerable body of literature, including, to take one example, a recent study which reported that "...there is not a single parent I have spoken with who does not want his or her children to achieve at the highest level" (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 157). But although they care, many Aboriginal parents are not getting involved with their children's schools.

Our respondents told us that many Aboriginal people have a different set of cultural values, and most non-Aboriginal, middle class teachers are unaware of this. Teachers, they told us, need to learn about Aboriginal cultures.

The explanation, we believe, has to do with the fact that most schools are white, middle class institutions, and most teachers are white, middle class people. There is a cultural/class divide between schools and teachers, and most Aboriginal students and their families. This is the case elsewhere in Canada, as well. For example, a study that included focus groups with Aboriginal people in British Columbia reported that:

> "Virtually every focus group expressed the notion that for Aboriginal people, schools tend to be intimidating places. They attribute much of this to direct or indirect experiences in residential schools and the attendant fear of the authority that school represents. ... Focus groups told us that many of today's schools continue to appear to them as unwelcoming places where there is little understanding of their fear, and where institutionalized racism continues to exist among both staff and students" (BC, Department of Education, 2001, p. 44).

This cultural/class divide needs to be bridged. "Schools need to go and talk to the parents in their own communities, get out of the schools and go and see what is in the community", said one community respondent. When we asked our community respondents, "Should schools be trying to engage with the whole community?", all but one (95.7%) said yes. This came out clearly and emphatically in the focus group with community respondents. They described how very intimidating it can be for many Aboriginal parents to cross the divide that separates them from the white, middle class schools and teachers. Our respondents told us that many Aboriginal people have a different set of cultural values, and most non-Aboriginal, middle class teachers are unaware of this. Teachers, they told us, need to learn about Aboriginal cultures. There is a strong desire on the part of our community respondents for schools and teachers to reach out to and involve the Aboriginal community as a whole, in order that the walls between schools and Aboriginal people can be broken down. We know that in some schools this is already happening (Schubert, April 1, 2002, p.10). But more needs to be done. The objective should be the genuine involvement of the Aboriginal community in real, substantive decision-making about their children's education.

1.7 Goals and Expectations

Aboriginal students still in high school, and former school leavers now enrolled in adult learner centres, have clear educational goals and expectations. For the students, all but one of them (97.8%) responded 'yes' to the question, "Do you consider succeeding in school to be important in your life?"; every single student (100%) told us that she or he expects to graduate; more than 4 in 5(85.1 %) say that they expect to go on to university or college; and just over 3 in 4 (78.7%) have clearly-defined career goals.

The students currently enrolled in adult learner centres are also very motivated. We asked them: "Why did you decide to return to school?". All of the men (100%) referred to specific job or career goals. Ten of the 16 women (62.5%) said they wanted to make a better life for their children, and 9 of the 16 (56.3%) said they wanted to get off welfare. Their comments (see sidebar) reflect a desire and a determination to become independent and to build a better future for themselves and their children.

Why did you decide to return to school?*

I want to get a decent job and get off welfare....I got tired of doing nothing....without it (grade 12) you'd be stuck on welfare and living in poverty all depressed (29 years; F).

School now is very important because I have my daughter to think about....I don't want to be on welfare; I can't live that way any more (20; F).

I wanted to do it for my children (23; F).

I want a better way of life for myself and for my children (25;F).

I don't want to be on welfare....I also want to set a good example for my son (22;F).

*In most cases in this and subsequent sidebars, the words of the respondents are direct quotes. In some cases the words used are taken from the interviewer's notes. In these latter cases the words accurately reflect the spirit of the response. F is female; M is male.

Given these responses, it was disturbing to learn that numerous female students in adult learner centres reported being actively dissuaded by social workers from returning to school. This determination to push women into the labour market rather than support their strong desires to return to school at an adult learner centre seems to us to be short-sighted.

We also asked the community respondents about student goals and expectations. We asked them: "In your opinion, do Aboriginal students have high educational expectations and aspirations?" The responses were mixed. Just over one-half (52%) said yes; 48% said no. This suggests to us that the high educational expectations and aspirations of the students we interviewed may not be the norm. Many of our community respondents observed that, based on their experience, Aboriginal children enter school in their early years with high expectations and aspirations. One respondent said that when she taught grade one, "...the students came with great expectations...". But for many of the students, these high expectations and aspirations are soon eroded. For some Aboriginal students, this is a product of their feelings of marginalization, caused by a school system in which the dominant culture is all-pervasive, and in which their own Aboriginal values are not validated. For those who are struggling with difficult home lives and family chaos and poverty, hope is all too often ground out of them. One long-time inner city community worker told us that few of the children that she sees regularly even think of ever attending university. Another said that it is "hard to dream" when thinking of survival. Without such dreams and aspirations, success at school is unlikely.

1.8 Relationships with teachers

We asked our student interviewees about their relationships with their teachers. The responses were mixed. In some respects, the responses were very positive, reflecting the dedication and commitment of teachers in Winnipeg's inner city. When we asked, "Do you think your teachers expect you to do well in school?", and "Do you get extra help from your teachers when you need it", 87.2% and 80.9% respectively of the students responded in the affir-

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mative. However, when we asked, "How well would you say Aboriginal students at your school get along with teachers?", less than half (46.7%) responded with positive comments like "very well", "good", or "OK", and interestingly, only one in four of the female students responded in this positive way to this question. Similarly, when we asked whether teachers at their school "understand Aboriginal students", less than half (44.4%) of the students responded affirmatively.

With respect to this latter question, we believe it would be reasonable to hypothesize that a similar proportion of *all* students would say that teachers do not understand them—teenagers rarely feel that they are understood by adults. So at first glance one might think that not much weight should be placed on the fact that less than half of the students responded positively to this question. However, at least some of the comments made by students in response to the question, "Do you feel that teachers at your school understand Aboriginal students?", are quite revealing (see sidebar).

We asked our 25 community respondents, "Based on your experience, do you think teachers 'understand' Aboriginal students?" Just over 3 in 4 (77.3%) said no. Teachers "don't understand the issues we're dealing with". In particular, "...many [Aboriginal] students live in poverty and how can teachers understand poverty when they themselves have never experienced it?"

These comments suggest to us that there is a divide, or 'disconnect', on cultural and class grounds, between Aboriginal students and their largely white, middle class teachers. As many Aboriginal students and community members see it, even though many teachers are trying, Aboriginal students and teachers occupy two different worlds, separated by lines of culture and class. This is suggested by comments in response to the question, "How well would you say Aboriginal students get along with teachers?" (See sidebar).

We also asked the 50 school leavers about their relationships with their teachers. For those not now in school, we asked about their relationships with the teachers they had when they were in school. As was the case for students still in school, the results were mixed (see Table Eight).

Do You Feel That Teachers At Your School Understand Aboriginal Students?

They try hard but I don't think they really understand them. Growing up in the north end and going to school is really tough. Teachers don't really see what is done after school. They don't really take the time to see them in their own environment (18; M).

Socially, I don't think most teachers know how it is to grow up on a reserve or poor (17; M).

They do not understand us because they are white (15; F).

They have different views on life and different attitudes. They have a different upbringing (17; M).

Not really, because they are white (16; F).

Some of them try to, but not really. Only a few teachers would understand. If they grew up on a reserve they might understand better (18; M).

Teachers make no conscious attempt to learn about Aboriginal culture. (16; M).

*F is female; M is male.

How well would you say Aboriginal students get along with teachers?

Not very well. Aboriginal students don't talk to the teachers; they just go to class and get it over with (16; F).

Not that great. I never saw an Indian talk to a white teacher. Regardless of who they are, white teachers help white kids all the time (16; M).

Most of them get frustrated with the constant put-downs, and eventually just pack it in (18; M).

*F is female; M is male.

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Table Eight: Responses to Questions About Relationships With Teachers By School Leavers Not Now in School

	Male	Female	Total
1. Percentage who said 'very well', or 'OK/average', to the question, "When you were in school, how well would you say you got along with your teachers?"	92.9%	100%	95.8%
2. Percentage who said yes to the question, "Were your teachers supportive of you and your work in school? Did they encourage you, or praise you when you did well?	78.6	100	87.5
3. Percentage who said yes to the question: "Do you think they cared about how well you did in school?"	71.4	80	75
4. Percentage who said yes to the question:"Do you feel that your teachers understood you?"	64.3	20	45.8
5. Percentage who said yes to the question: "Did they understand Aboriginal students?"	71.4	20	50

For the first three questions, results are strongly positive for both men and women. Most respondents, and especially the women, believe that they got along well with their teachers when they were in school, and that their teachers cared about how well they did and were supportive of their efforts. However, as was the case with the students, half or fewer of the respondents believed that teachers understood them in particular, or understood Aboriginal students more generally, and as was also the case with the students, a particularly low proportion of female respondents believed that teachers understood them in particular, or understood Aboriginal students more generally. And like the students, some of the comments made by those not now in school suggest that there is a divide on cultural/class/experiential grounds, between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal teachers. Their life experience puts a distance between them. One 34 year old female respondent said: "They didn't grow up like me, so they couldn't understand what I was going through", and a 33 year old woman added: "I couldn't be open to them, or tell them anything....I didn't have anyone to tell all my problems".

We asked similar questions of school leavers who are now enrolled in adult learner centres, and the responses were dramatically different (Table Nine).

Table Nine: Responses to Questions About Relationships With Teachers By School Leavers Now Enroled in Adult Learner Centres

	Male	Female	Total
1. Percentage who said 'very well', or 'OK/average', to the question, "How well would you say you got along with your teachers now?"	100%	100%	100%
2. Percentage who said yes to the question, "Are your teachers supportive of you and your work in school?"	100	100	100
3. Percentage who said yes to the question: "Do you think they care about how well you did in school?"	90	100	96.2
4. Percentage who said 'better' to the question,"How would you say going to school here compares with when you previously went to school? Is it better? Worse? About the same?"	90	93.8	92.3

The responses in Table Nine show that the students whom we interviewed who are in adult learner centres have positive feelings about their teachers, and prefer the adult learner centres to the high schools they previously attended. Their comments suggest that the reason for this is the close personal attention they receive from teachers, and the respectful and flexible manner in which they are treated by teachers. Repeatedly these students said things about their teachers like: "I'm able to talk with them, even about things not related to school"; "they take time to get to know you"; "they treat you like an adult"; "they treat me with respect"; "the teachers here have a little more understanding and patience. They take time to listen to us".

The responses by Aboriginal students at adult learner centres, particularly when compared with the responses of Aboriginal students at inner city high schools, suggest the possibility that the adult learner centres have found ways of bridging the cultural/class/experiential divide referred to earlier. We believe that these tentative findings warrant further study.

We also asked questions about Aboriginal teachers. First, when we asked students, "Have you had any Aboriginal teachers here in Winnipeg?", the answers were striking. One in three students have not had a single Aboriginal teacher in Winnipeg. These are students in Winnipeg's inner city! And a high proportion of them have attended many schools, and have thus been exposed to a great many teachers. If we add to those who have had no Aboriginal teachers, those who said they have had only one or two, the proportion rises to more than half (57.8%). When we asked, "Should there be more Aboriginal teachers?", all but two (95.6%), said yes, many in an emphatic and enthusiastic way. When we asked why they thought there should be more Aboriginal teachers, many of their answers seem to confirm our hypothesis that there is a significant cultural/class/experiential divide between Aboriginal students and a largely non-Aboriginal teaching force (see sidebar).

Should there be more Aboriginal teachers? Why/why not?

Able to relate to me because they are from the same background (16; F).

Definitely, so they can actually understand where some students are coming from (16; M).

To make Aboriginal students feel more comfortable (15; F).

It would probably make a big difference (17; M).

*F is female; M is male.

We asked school leavers about Aboriginal teachers, and the responses are shown in Table Ten.

Table Ten: Responses to Questions About Aboriginal Teachers, by School Leavers

	Adult Learner		Not in School	
Percentage Who Answered in the Affirmative	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
1. Did you have any Aboriginal teachers when you went to school here in Winnipeg?"	79%*	40%	10%	19%
2. "Did it/would it make a difference to you?"	64	70	80	20
3. "Should there be more Aboriginal teachers?"	86	90	90	100

* This percentage is as high as it is because several of these respondents attended Children of the Earth, Winnipeg's Aboriginal High School.

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These responses to questions about Aboriginal teachers are similar to those by current high school students to the same questions. Most significantly, when we asked, "Should there be more Aboriginal teachers?", all but four answered yes, some emphatically.

We asked the community respondents, "Do you think it would make a difference if there were more Aboriginal teachers?" All but two (92%) said yes. More Aboriginal teachers, they said, would contribute to overcoming the distance between schools and Aboriginal students and their families, and would make both students and parents feel more comfortable in the schools. Many added, however, that it is not just a matter of putting more Aboriginal teachers in the classroom, as important as this would be. It is also that Aboriginal teachers must understand Aboriginal history and culture, and must understand what it is to be poor and Aboriginal in Winnipeg's inner city. And for this to be the case requires changes in the teacher training process. Several of the community respondents referred to what they considered to be the inadequacies of teacher training at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg Faculties of Education. Not only do these faculties produce relatively few Aboriginal teachers, but also the education that is provided to prospective teachers includes almost no Aboriginal history and culture. It continues to be, some argued, a Eurocentric education.

Based on these findings we include in our recommendations, later in this report, some specific observations about the need to produce more Aboriginal teachers, and to produce more teachers—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—with a firm grasp of what it is to be an Aboriginal person in Winnipeg's inner city today, and a thorough understanding of the history and culture of Aboriginal people.

1.9 Curriculum

We asked students and school leavers for their perceptions of the curriculum at their schools/former schools, and we asked community respondents for their perceptions of the curriculum more generally, and their answers are consistent with their comments about Aboriginal teachers.

For the students, when we asked, "Does your school offer any courses on Aboriginal history or culture?", just over one-half (51.1%) answered yes. When we asked, "Does that matter to you?", 85% said yes, and when we asked, "Do you think that matters to other Aboriginal students?", all but one, 97.6%, said yes. When the same questions(but in the past tense) were asked of the school leavers not now in school, the proportion responding in the affirmative was 58.3% for the first question, 66.7% for the second, and 100% for the third. We asked the same three questions of those students now enrolled in adult learner centres. All but one (96.2%) said yes to the first question and all but two (92.3%) said yes to the second question. Every student said yes when asked, "Do you think that matters to other Aboriginal students?" (See Table Eleven). In short, of the 97 Aboriginal high school students and school leavers interviewed, 96 (98.97%) answered in the affirmative when asked whether they thought that more Aboriginal content in the curriculum matters to Aboriginal students.

Table Eleven: Responses to Questions About Aboriginal Curriculum

Percentage Who Responded in the Affirmative	High School Students	Not Now in School	Adult Learner Centre
1. Does/did your school offer any courses that are/were particularly relevant to Aboriginal students, like Aboriginal history or culture?	50	58.3	96.2
2. Does/did that matter to you?	87.2	66.7	92.3
3. Do you think it matters to other Aboriginal students?	97.6	100	100

In examining these responses, several things stand out. First, it appears that Aboriginal students want such courses, and they say such courses matter to them and to other Aboriginal students. Second, many of the respondents refer to the lack of knowledge of Aboriginal culture and languages among Aboriginal youth, and their desire to know more about themselves and their culture and history. Given issues related to identity and self-esteem, which we believe to be the products of colonialism and the internalization of colonial oppression which we will discuss in Part Two of the paper, this seems to us to be especially important. Third, we note that Aboriginal students consider some cultural programs offered in some schools to be lip-service or window-dressing. A pow-wow club after 3:30 or a sharing circle every now and then does not, it appears, satisfy what we believe to be the genuine craving of many Aboriginal youth to "know themselves".

Does your school offer any courses on Aboriginal history or culture?; Does that matter to you?; Do you think it matters to other Aboriginal students?

Most Native students don't know anything about their history and are willing to learn about their own culture (17; M).

I'm really into my culture and finding out more about my culture and teachings (17; F).

My mother never taught me and the course [at COTE] taught me to be proud of myself and my history (23; F).

Most Aboriginal students don't know their language or history (18; F).

There is so much to the Aboriginal culture that they just do not learn at home or on the street that certain things have to be taught in the classroom (18; M).

They have a course related to Native Studies, but I think it's crap as all they do is teach how to make dream catchers. They should have more meaningful courses on how Aboriginal people lived and contributed to society (17; M).

To me it doesn't really matter, but to other Aboriginal students it is very important (21; M).

They did the sharing circle, but only once or twice a year to get everyone involved (18; M).

At [an inner city high school] there was no mention of Aboriginal culture (24; M).

*F is female; M is male.

We asked our community respondents this question: "Based on what you know about school in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, would you say there is sufficient Aboriginal content in the curriculum?" These community respondents should have considerable knowledge of the curriculum, since more than three-quarters of them have children or grandchildren attending school in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and 40% are themselves involved in education. Not a single respondent said yes. Five said they believe improvements are being made, two said they did not know, and the rest, 72%, said no, there is not sufficient Aboriginal content in the curriculum. Some felt very strongly about this issue. "Don't get me going on that!", said one. Some acknowledged the work that has been done in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 on curriculum development, reflecting the view of senior administrators and trustees at WSD No. 1 that the division has taken many steps in this regard. But our community respondents said that what has been done is not enough.

One problem pointed to is that the Aboriginal content in the curriculum is not mandatory. It is there, but it does not *have* to be taught. As one respondent put it: "There's so much good stuff there, it just needs to be used". It is difficult for many teachers to use the Aboriginal content in the curriculum when Aboriginal history and culture have not been a part of their own education. This is a function, in part, of what is taught at the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg Faculties of Education, as will be discussed in Part Two of this paper. Several community respondents also added that it is not enough for the Aboriginal content to be an "add-on". As one put it, reflecting some of the students' comments: "Schools should not bring out the 'Indian stuff' once a year and say this is curriculum. All it does is feed into the stereotyping of Aboriginal people". They argue that knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture has to be infused throughout the curriculum. It has to be something that all students are exposed to, as part of the 'normal' process of attending a Winnipeg high school.

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When we asked our community respondents, "Do you think that a curriculum with more Aboriginal content would make a difference?", every respondent (100%) said yes. Some pointed to the effect that learning about their own history and culture had on them. "It was like a light went on", said one community member, describing when she was first exposed to Aboriginal history. A second respondent pointed to the psychological effect that learning about one's own history and culture can have on a student, and did so by reference to a term, "conscientization", used by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Friere (Friere, 1970; 1981). Friere argued that a people who have been colonized and oppressed are psychologically liberated when they learn their history from their own perspective. This is of great importance for Aboriginal students in Winnipeg, many of whom have internalized the colonial oppression of Aboriginal people. The National Indian Brotherhood spoke to this issue more than 30 years ago, saying:

> "Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being.... The Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it....The present school system is culturally alien to Native students. Where the Indian contribution is not entirely ignored, it is often cast in an unfavourable light....Courses in Indian history and culture should promote pride in the Indian child, and respect in the non-Indian student" (Kirkness, 1992, p.34).

Our respondents have overwhelmingly expressed a desire for such courses.

1.10 School Climate

When we asked our student respondents about the 'school climate' in their school, the responses were positive, but mixed. When we asked, "Do you think your school cares about Aboriginal students", more than 2 in 3 (69.8%) said yes; when we asked, "Do Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students do things together, or do they stay apart", more than 3 in 4 (76.2%) said they do things together; and when we asked, "Are you proud of your school?", almost 3 in 4 (71.4%) said yes. This latter finding is especially significant because the same question was asked in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 S4 (Grade12) Survey, 2001/02, and in that case 64.1% said yes.

However, the proportion of Aboriginal students who responded yes to the question, "Do you feel that Aboriginal students in your school are treated with respect?" is much lower, just over half (53.2%). This pattern is consistent with students' responses to questions about teachers. And some of those who answered yes, Aboriginal students are treated with respect, gave the very reasons that were used by other students to criticize their schools. For instance, one 18 year old female student said "Yes, Aboriginal Day and pow wows", while an 18 year old male student at the same school said "...the pow wow club they have now is a total farce". Our interpretation of this is that some Aboriginal students are happy if they see that their school is trying, even if only in a surface way, while others decry these initiatives as surface attempts and call for a meaningful treatment of Aboriginal history and culture. This interpretation is also reflected in some of the comments by students about curriculum, as shown in the sidebar on page 21.

We asked our community respondents, "Based on your experience, do you feel that Aboriginal students feel comfortable and welcome in school?" Only one said yes; 70 % said no; the remainder said it depends on the school. One respondent, a former inner city teacher, said that "based on my experience in inner city schools, there are great efforts to make students feel welcome". We believe this to be the case. Many teachers and schools are trying hard, and Aboriginal students recognize this. How else could one explain the fact that a higher proportion of Aboriginal student respondents (71.4%) than of students who responded to the

Winnipeg School Division No. 1 Grade 12 Survey (64.1%) are proud of their school? Yet the proportion of Aboriginal students who feel that they are treated with respect is significantly lower, as is the proportion of Aboriginal students who believe that teachers understand Aboriginal students. The problem, we believe, is the existence of a cultural/class/experiential divide between Aboriginal students and primarily white middle class teachers and institutions. The result is that despite the great efforts made to make Aboriginal students feel welcome, most community respondents believe that Aboriginal students are made to feel "...that they don't belong there".

1.11 Racism

We asked students, "What do you think racism is?" Every student responded with a description of what we would consider to be overt racism. They said they consider racism to be "calling others down" because of the belief that one group is better than another, or one group being biased against another, or discrimination, or hating others because they are different, or not treating people fairly because they are different. There are less overt forms of racism, including institutional racism, and we will say more about those later. But when asked what they consider racism to be, the students that we interviewed described variants of overt racism.

...almost one-third of the Aboriginal high school students that we interviewed said yes when asked if there is much racism in their schools

We then asked students, "Would you say there is much racism in your school?" Just under 70% said no. However, 31.8% , or just under one in three, said yes. We consider it to be significant and worrisome that almost one-third of the Aboriginal high school students that we interviewed said yes when asked if there is much racism in their schools, particularly when the kind of racism that they are referring to is the kind that is right out in the open. Some of the comments made by students are especially troublesome. One 17 year female student said: "I see it all the time so I've learned to shake it off". Another 17 year old female student said: "Mostly just white people with Aboriginal students. They call them down by saying 'squaw'". An 18 year old male student said: "They expect me to come to school with a feather in my head".

Lest this comment about the feather seem far-fetched, one of our community respondents described to us a recent incident with his 8 year old daughter at a St. Vital school. She came home saying that the next day they were going to be learning about Aboriginal people in school and everyone was to come dressed as an Indian. His daughter was perplexed, and concerned. "How do Indians dress?", she asked her Aboriginal parents. She went the next day, dressed as she normally dresses—ie., the way Aboriginal people dress—and in the company of her father. He reported to us that most of the children in the class had feathers in their hair.

Another community respondent told us of a case involving her daughter's elementary school teacher in a central Winnipeg school proposing to have the students in the class perform the play *Peter Pan*. Our respondent informed the teacher that she considered the choice of play to be inappropriate because of its stereotypically negative portrayal of Aboriginal people. The teacher was taken aback, having never thought of the problem.

Was this parent over-reacting? We do not think so. Tatum describes a US study of preschoolers' perceptions of Native Americans. When asked to draw a picture of an Indian:

> "Almost every picture included one central feature: feathers. They had all internalized a picture of what Indians were like. How did they know? Cartoon images, in particular the Disney movie *Peter Pan*, were cited by the children as their number one source of information. At the age of three, these children already had a set of stereotypes in place" (Tatum, 1999, p. 4).

These stereotypes are deeply rooted in the dominant culture, as has been seen above by some of the names that Aboriginal students report having been called.

When we asked how racism affects them, students made comments that are particularly revealing. For example, one student said: "It gets me pissed off. But I know better. Drugs are for stupid people" (18; M). The implication that some Aboriginal students find solace from such overt forms of racism in self-destructive behaviour, like drugs, is clear.

When we interviewed Aboriginal people who have previously left school and are not now in a formal educational setting, the answers revealed a still stronger presence of overt racism in the schools, and a very adverse reaction by Aboriginal students. We asked: "Did you experience any instances of racism in your school?" Almost 6 in 10 (58.3%) said yes, and most of those who said no had attended Children of the Earth, R.B.Russell (where most of the students are Aboriginal), and Songe'dwin, the off-site program of Niji Mahkwa school for selected Aboriginal high school students. Similarly, only one (3.8%) of those students in an adult learner centre reported having experienced racism there. The comments made by school leavers about their experience in high school are disturbing (see sidebar).

It seems clear to us that in the schools in Winnipeg's inner city there is a good deal of overt racism, particularly in the form of stereotyping and name-calling. Some Aboriginal students, especially those who are light-skinned and who do not appear to be Aboriginal, may not see it, or may experience it differently. Some students simply ignore it or shrug it off and move on. But many Aboriginal students feel these racist barbs deeply. In many cases these students react against, or *resist*, these expressions of racism. They get into fights—numerous students and school leavers and at least two community respondents mentioned fighting by Aboriginal students as a response to overt instances of racism—and then come to be seen as troublemakers, with various negative consequences following from that. One school leaver, speaking at a focus group, referred to the constant name-calling and stereotyping—there is "lots of it"— by saying: "You've got to learn to walk away from it or you're going to be fighting all your life".

In other cases students resist simply by leaving. This came out clearly in focus groups with students and school leavers. One participant—a University of Winnipeg student who happened to sit in on this focus group—described attending numerous Winnipeg schools, being subjected to name-calling at each of them, being placed in special education programs, and repeatedly leaving schools in anger and frustration. Another described attending four Winnipeg high schools, some of them for just a couple of days because "that's how bad it is". Overt racism exists in Winnipeg's inner city high schools, and it is hurtful to many Aboriginal students, and it must surely exacerbate the cultural/class/experiential divide that separates many Aboriginal students from the process of formal education.

Some, perhaps many, of these students are not failing; they are choosing, for perfectly under-

Did you experience any instances of racism in your school?

Some students would make racial comments like 'squaw' or 'dirty Indian'. It made me feel like not wanting to come to school. The comments brought me down and [made me] ashamed of who I was (21; F; not now in school).

They were racist and I became a rebel and fought back. I became a bully....they would make whooping actions and sounds (33; F; not now in school).

I experienced a lot of racism. I was always called terrible names. It really hurt me....made me feel small. Made me ask myself, 'What is wrong with me' (18; M; not now in school).

I felt it [the racism] really sharp....Would get butterflies inside. Couldn't wait to get out of that school (24; M; not now in school).

The non-Aboriginals would call us 'wagon-burners' and 'Red Injuns' and 'squaw'. That was when I got into trouble because I would fight them....I dropped out of school. I felt that that school would never change and that the non-Aboriginals would always get their way (21;F; not now in school).

When I was growing up there was a lot of racism in the areas I grew up in, especially East Kildonan and St. Vital. Students picked on us, called us names (20; M; adult learner centre).

*F is female; M is male.

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standable reasons, to reject school. Indeed, as we will argue later, we believe that a good deal of the Aboriginal experience in school can best be explained as various forms of resistance to an institution seen by them in many ways to be alien to their experience.

But there are deeper and more subtle forms of racism in inner city high schools, and in society generally. It was our community respondents who pushed us into a consideration of this less immediately visible but probably more pervasive racism. We asked our community respondents, "In your opinion, is racism a factor for Aboriginal students in school?" Every respondent (100%) replied in the affirmative. Some referred to stereotyping and name-calling, and provided additional examples, but most said things like: "Many people do not know that they are racist"; and what exists is a "sometimes unconscious racism"; and "the face of racism is very subtle now", it is "well-masked". Some of our students saw this as well. One said: "It is hidden so people can't see it." And the participants in a focus group that we organized with directors of adult learner centres also emphasized the prevalence of what they called "subtle racism" in Winnipeg high schools. One referred to a racism "...so subtle that it's hard to point to or articulate", but as another respondent put it, "we are very sensitive to racism....we read these things" (May 23, 2002). It is this more subtle form of racism, usually called institutional racism, that our community respondents emphasized in their comments to us.

Institutional racism takes many forms. It is, most obviously, the overwhelming predominance of non-Aboriginal personnel working in the educational system—even in those inner city schools where Aboriginal students comprise a very high proportion of the total student body.

Institutional racism takes many forms. It is, most obviously, the overwhelming predominance of non-Aboriginal personnel working in the educational system—even in those inner city schools where Aboriginal students comprise a very high proportion of the total student body. An Aboriginal student entering a Winnipeg inner city high school and seeing that almost none of the teaching and administrative staff are Aboriginal is likely to feel that the school is an alien institution. Another example is the use of standardized testing, which takes no account of cultural differences.

Racism is often, however, less visible. For example, it is the lower expectations held of Aboriginal as compared to non-Aboriginal students. A recent study of the way in which teachers in a Winnipeg inner city high school interact with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students concluded that teachers have lower expectations of Aboriginal students (Yatta Kanu, personal communication, June 5, 2002. See Kanu, 2002). It may be that this is unconscious. It is an example of institutional racism (see sidebar).

Another example is the "buried stereotypes" that many non-Aboriginal people carry in their heads—buried in the sense that they may be sub-conscious, or in the sense of what one community respondent described as "preconceived ideas about our abilities". This may lead to streaming Aboriginal students into non-academic programs or too quickly pushing them into special education, which may also be an expression of institutional racism. A recent textbook on education and multiculturalism argues that:

"In a 1986 study 500 Grade 5 teachers received a student profile of a ten-year-old boy that described him as being sometimes disruptive in class but not behaviour disordered. He was two to three years behind in language and mathematics, but he was not learning disabled. Attached to the profile was a questionnaire consisting of nine items. Samples of the questions are: "Do you , the teacher, have the resources you need to meet the needs of this child? does your school have the necessary resources to meet the needs of the child? will this student graduate? would you have the support of the parents? should this child be transferred to a special program"? Only the ethnicity of the child was changed: 25 percent of the 500 teachers received a profile describing the student as Caucasion, 25 percent as Asian, 25 percent as East Indian and 25 percent as Native Indian. Of the returned questionnaires, the majority of the responses were positive when ethnicity was given as Causcasion or Asian while the majority of responses were negative when ethnicity was given as Native Indian" (Williams, 2000, p. 142)

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> "...teachers are often not aware of the different ways in which they treat students, they may reflect the systemic discrimination of society and school cultures. Studies have shown that subtle and overt forms of discrimination result from teachers' attitudes because their lack of information leads them to make inappropriate assumptions about children of different racial groups. If they operate within a framework of stereotypes, teachers may equate minority students and poor performance, with the result that these students are over-represented in special education and lower-ability groups" (Gnosh, 2002, p.100).

Another example of institutional racism is the continued use of textbooks that assume subjects from the dominant culture, and thus construct Aboriginal people as the 'other'. For example, a textbook might say that 'we' settled the West in the late 19th century, thus making Aboriginal students the 'other'. Such constructions are common. Another is the high financial cost of participating in some extra-curricular activities: choirs and bands at some schools, for example, take trips, but parents are required to contribute considerable sums—in some cases that we know of, in the hundreds of dollars—to enable their children to participate. Yet another is the way in which non-Aboriginal people judge Aboriginal people, without any real knowledge of our country's history of colonialism and of the cumulative disadvantages that weigh on Aboriginal people as the result of colonialism. The cultural/class divide that separates so many schools and teachers from so many Aboriginal students is invisible to many, and can lead to a 'blame the victim' response—a form of institutional racism.

The cultural/class divide that separates so many schools and teachers from so many Aboriginal students is invisible to many, and can lead to a 'blame the victim' response—a form of institutional racism.

We believe, based on our interviews, that these forms of institutional racism are pervasive in Winnipeg's inner city high schools, as they are in society generally. Much of it is not being done intentionally or even consciously. But it is there, and it is a significant part of the explanation for why so many Aboriginal students are not thriving in the school system. And we believe that if non-Aboriginal teachers and administrators were to grapple openly with the problem—name it, describe it, come to accept and to understand its prevalence—they could eliminate much or perhaps most of it. But racism is such an ugly word that when an Aboriginal person says something is racist, the tendency is to retreat, to go on the defensive, to deny the racism. As one community respondent put it: "People are really uncomfortable when you talk about racism. Their own personal beliefs get challenged". And their power gets challenged, much in the way that the power of men, for example, was and is challenged by women who talk about sexism. The result is that it is very difficult to find a safe and constructive space in which to struggle through this complex and subtle issue, and for some there is a reluctance to do so, because they benefit from and are comfortable within the currently structured dominant culture. And so long as that is the case, the problem persists, and indeed worsens. And so we see that 75% of our community respondents do not believe that teachers expect Aboriginal students to succeed in school, and 70% of community respondents do not think that Aboriginal students "feel welcome and comfortable in school", and 77% do not believe that teachers 'understand' Aboriginal students, and 100% believe that racism is a factor for Aboriginal students in school. Uncomfortable and difficult though it may be, this problem of racism in the schools and in the educational system more broadly must be confronted.

We asked community respondents, "Overall, how would you say that schools meet the needs of Aboriginal students?". Just over one-half (55.6%) said that they believe that schools deserve an "F" (For a similar conclusion, see Richards, 2001, p. 32). They said things like: Overall the system has failed our kids; I would give the system a grade of F—failed; The schools have failed our children; I would say that the system has failed many kids; I feel that the system has failed our students; I feel that schools have in many ways failed our students; Generally speaking I would give them an F—failed. The 55.6% goes to 83.3%, if we include those who said they feel

the school system is not meeting or cannot meet the needs of Aboriginal students, or is not doing very well or is doing poorly. We consider it important to recall that the community respondents who are making this rather harsh judgement are Aboriginal people who have very high levels of educational achievement, most of whom have children and/or grandchildren in the school system, many of whom are themselves working in the school system or working directly with Aboriginal youth. There is a cultural/class/experiential divide between schools and Aboriginal students, and a part of the problem is various subtle and often unintentional forms of racism, and this is adversely affecting Aboriginal students' chances of succeeding in school.

1.12 Aboriginal students and part-time jobs

We think this cultural/class/experiential divide may also have an effect on Aboriginal youth finding jobs. We asked Aboriginal students who are still in high school, "Did you have a job during the school year?" Just over 1 in 3 (36.2%) answered yes. By comparison, according to the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 S4 (Grade 12) Survey, 2001/02, the proportion of Grade 12 students in the Division who responded to the survey who held a job during the school year was more than twice as high(76.3%). This is consistent with findings for the province as a whole. For the age cohort 15-19 years, twice as many Aboriginal as non-Aboriginal respondents (66.1% compared to 33.4%) reported having no work experience (Canada and Manitoba, 2002). Further, when we asked "Do many Aboriginal students hold jobs during the school year", just over one-half of the students (52.2%) said yes, but among the males, 7 of the 14 who said yes qualified their answers by saying "but not many", or "just a few". We know, too, from the *Youth in Transition* survey, that in Canada as a whole, those who graduate from high school are more likely to have held a paid job during their final year than those who do not graduate (Bowley and McMullen, 2002). The lower proportion of Aboriginal students working is likely partly attributable to the fact that they include students in grades 9, 10 and 11, as well as grade 12. However, there is more to the issue than this, and we consider our findings to be revealing.

The lower proportion of Aboriginal students holding jobs during the school year appears to be at least partly attributable to their attitudes about themselves and about the labour market. We found that some of the students claimed not to know how to get a job, or claimed not to have the skills necessary to get a job. This is especially notable given that these students are relatively successful academically, and have high expectations and aspirations. Others claimed that they tried to get a job but were frustrated in their attempts, or believed that few employers hire Aboriginal people. They made comments like: "most Aboriginal students don't know how to get jobs, don't know what is involved in getting a job"; "I don't have work skills"; and "there are not too many places that seem to hire Aboriginal students".

...a very high proportion of Aboriginal youth (aged 15-24) in Winnipeg's inner city are unemployed or not in the labour market at all.

It is likely that such beliefs are reinforced by what these students see around them in Winnipeg's inner city. We know that a very high proportion of Aboriginal youth (aged 15-24) in Winnipeg's inner city are unemployed or not in the labour market at all. In 1996 the unemployment rate in Winnipeg was 7.9%. In Winnipeg's inner city it was 15.4%. Among inner city youth the unemployment rate was 18.9%, and for inner city Aboriginal youth it was 35.1%. The same pattern prevails for labour force participation rates, which measure the proportion of those who are working or actively looking for work. In 1996 the labour force participation rate in Winnipeg was approximately 67%. In the inner city it was 58.4%. And for Aboriginal youth in the inner city it was 40.1% (Luzubski, Silver and Black, 2000, pp.31-35). In short, only 4 in 10 Aboriginal youth in the inner city were in the labour force, and of these more than one-third were unemployed. The vast majority of Aboriginal youth were therefore not working for wages.

1.13 The struggle to survive

Conditions are harsh for many Aboriginal families in Winnipeg's inner city. One inner city community worker said, referring to many inner city Aboriginal youth, that based on her experience, "basically they're surviving". Conditions at home are such that kids may be pulled out of school to look after younger siblings or to do laundry or other chores because Mom is 'swamped'. Housing problems mean that rates of mobility are extremely high, so that children are constantly leaving one school for another. Drinking and drugs are sometimes a response by the adults in a household, and when day-to-day life simply gets too chaotic and overwhelming, "school is the first thing to go, it's a pressure they can do without". At the focus group meeting for community respondents one person said: "Their survival is where they're at, never mind learning". Another respondent said: "The main reason is poverty; it really affects their stress level". And how can a young person dream of a better future when dealing with such home circumstances? It's "hard to dream", one community respondent said, when you are focused on survival. "There's so much of a survival mentality that it disables you from dreaming", said another community respondent who works with young Aboriginal girls. We believe these comments reflect the experiential divide that separates many Aboriginal students from their largely non-Aboriginal, middle class schools.

1.14 Resisting school

Drawing upon a significant body of U.S. literature (for example, Ogbu, 1978; Fordham and Ogbu,1986) which shows that many African-American high school students who succeed in school are accused by their peers of "acting white", and are ostracized for it, we asked students the following question: "Have you ever heard of Aboriginal students who do well in school being teased or rejected by other Aboriginal students?" Just over 4 in 10 (41.3%) said yes, and one-third (33.3%) of the school leavers not now in school said yes to the same question. Many of those who said yes said they hear such comments frequently. This came out very clearly in focus group sessions with Aboriginal students and school leavers--- Aboriginal students who do well in school will get a hard time from their peer group. One community respondent active in the inner city said: "Within the community [there is] lots of joking if somebody's trying to better themselves....they're trying to be white, that's a real common thing that I hear". Another said: "Many Aboriginal youth think it's a 'white' thing to get an education". Many Aboriginal students feel they have to pull away from their communities and give up something of themselves in order to succeed in school, and doing so is painful. One student at a focus group said: "I sacrificed my language, I sacrificed my family, just to get to where I am now", adding "It's a price we all have to pay". One of our community respondents, speaking at a focus group meeting, described himself getting sick and angry when, as an adult, he took a University English course. At first he could not understand why, and then he realized it had its roots in his early education experience: "I was beaten into speaking English", and angry at having to give up his culture. We believe that many Aboriginal students are not prepared to pay this price. So at a conscious or perhaps sub-conscious level, they 'choose' not to succeed in school. They reject school. It is a form of resistance.

There is a cultural/class/experiential divide between many Aboriginal students, and largely white, middle class schools and teachers. Many Aboriginal students are responding by simply rejecting school, and in some cases may even be putting pressure on other Aboriginal students to do likewise. This is an issue less of 'failing' in school, than of 'choosing' not to succeed in a school which feels, and often is, alien.

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1.15 Summary of our findings from the interviews

What stands out in the responses by Aboriginal people to our questions about their experience in school is the existence of what we have identified as a cultural/class/experiential divide between Aboriginal students and their families on the one hand, and the school system on the other. In many, perhaps most, cases the life experiences and the values of Aboriginal students and their families, differ significantly from what they experience in the schools, which are run largely by white middle class people for the purpose of advancing the values of the dominant culture. The same argument has been made by Jean Anyon in her powerful study of an inner city school in Newark, New Jersey. Anyon argues that the divide "...makes the middle class curriculum and language alien to them....The concentration of minority poor in city neighbourhoods has contributed to the extreme separation in US society between black and white, poor and more affluent" (Anyon, 1997, p. 95). Gnosh (2002, p.95) adds: "...groups outside the mainstream live in a different world from those on the inside and are not socialized with the values, beliefs, and aspirations for school learning that are common to school culture".

Most Aboriginal students currently in school spoke positively about their teachers and their schools, and we think that, generally speaking, this reflects well on teachers and schools. But when asked whether teachers understood Aboriginal students, or whether they believed that Aboriginal students are treated with respect in their schools, their responses are much more mixed. The issue of respect is significant. As one Aboriginal respondent said to us, what Aboriginal people mean by respect is the "recognition of people's inherent equality". In Professor Yatta Kanu's research in a Winnipeg inner city high school—one of those schools from which we selected interviewees—she found that: "All the research participants [Aboriginal students] identified 'respect' as the most important dimension of the teachers' interpersonal state" (Kanu, 2002, p.16). Celia Haig-Brown found the same in her study of 16 Aboriginal students in a Regina inner city high school, where "all the students identified 'respect' as 'the number one rule' for successful interactions among teachers, staff and students in the school" (quoted in Kanu, 2002, pp.16-17). Approximately one-half of our high school respondents do not feel that their school treats Aboriginal students with respect, and do not feel that teachers understand Aboriginal students, and we believe that their comments about this are consistent with our view that there exists a cultural/class/experiential divide between Aboriginal students and inner city high schools. This appears to be the case elsewhere in Canada as well. A recent BC study, for example, found that in focus groups with Aboriginal people: "Most groups perceived a cultural divide between a largely Euro-centric work force in the education system, and the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people. They believe that such a lack of understanding contributes in no small measure to the adjustment problems faced by many Aboriginal students in school" (British Columbia, 2001, p. 43). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded that for Aboriginal youth, "Education as they experience it is something removed and separate from their everyday world, their hopes and dreams. This sense of distance between learning in the school and the world around them does not have to exist" (Canada, 1996, Vol. 3, p.482).

There is a cultural/class/experiential divide between many Aboriginal students, and largely white, middle class schools and teachers.

This view is reinforced by what we consider to be the shockingly high incidence in inner city high schools of overt forms of racism—name-calling and stereotyping, for example—and the more institutionalized forms of racism identified especially by our community respondents. It is reinforced by the surprisingly high proportion of Aboriginal students who, despite attending many inner city schools, have either never had an Aboriginal teacher or have had only one or two out of many teachers. The face that most schools present to Aboriginal students is quite literally, not Aboriginal. Aboriginal students *experience* the divide between who they are and what the schools are on a daily basis, and although some of them learn to navigate their way

through the system, much of what they experience is negative, as if the divide were a hierarchy in which Aboriginal people are seen to be at the bottom, and are treated accordingly—with what many of them take to be a lack of respect, and even, in far too many cases, with negative stereotyping and name-calling.

Aboriginal students fight back, in some cases as we have frequently been told, quite literally. They resist an institution which many of them see as being, in important and tangible ways, quite alien to them. That resistance, we believe, takes many forms: acting out in ways that take the form of disciplinary or academic 'problems'; rejecting school by dropping out entirely; ostracizing those who 'succeed' in school on the grounds that this implies abandoning Aboriginal ways and 'acting white'. We will return to this theme in Part Two of the paper.

The response by non-Aboriginal authorities to the cultural/class/experiential divide has always been, and continues to be, assimilation. It has been, and is, the attempt to force Aboriginal people to abandon their culture and to assimilate into, to adopt, the dominant culture. Schools have always played a central role, perhaps *the* central role, in this assimilation strategy. As Aboriginal scholar Marie Battiste has put it: "No force has been more effective at oppressing First Nations cultures than the education system" (Battiste, 2000, p.163). But Aboriginal people have steadfastly resisted attempts at assimilation, and in doing so have resisted the education system as an agent of assimilation.

We think it is essential to understand Aboriginal students' performance in school in this context. There is a cultural/class/experiential divide between them and the schools; they experience that divide daily in a host of ways; and many respond to that divide—consciously or unconsciously—by resisting, and often rejecting, the school system.

Aboriginal students *experience* the divide between who they are and what the schools are on a daily basis, and although some of them learn to navigate their way through the system, much of what they experience is negative...

This is not the way in which this issue is generally understood. It is generally understood as being a problem of Aboriginal students failing in school, of their having a dropout rate double that of non-Aboriginal students. But framing the issue as being Aboriginal students' failures in school leads inexorably to 'deficit' thinking—ie., that Aboriginal students have a deficit, that the problem is the Aboriginal students. What follows is that it is the Aboriginal students who need 'fixing', and this inevitably leads back to the thinking that drove the residential schools—the solution, as believed and acted upon then, is to "...raise them to the level of the whites" (Haig-Brown, 1988, p.25). The logic of such thinking is that Aboriginal culture is inferior, and Aboriginal people must be raised to the level of the superior culture. This approach has simply not worked. Aboriginal people do not and will not accept these racist assumptions. They resist such assumptions, and thus resist schools. We will return in Part Two of this paper to a more detailed discussion of this interpretation.

What Aboriginal people have said to us about the educational system is *not* that Aboriginal people should be forced to change in order to 'succeed' in school, but rather that schools and the educational system generally should change in order to better reflect the demographic and cultural reality of our community—a demographic and cultural reality that is particularly pronounced in Winnipeg's inner city, which is the focus of our study, but is by no means confined to the inner city. Students, school-leavers and community respondents were close to unanimous in calling for more Aboriginal teachers and more Aboriginal content in the curriculum. They are saying, yes, there is a cultural/class/experiential divide between us and the school system, and that divide should be bridged, but it should be bridged not by forcing us to become more like you, but rather by changing the educational system to more accurately reflect the demographic and cultural reality of our city—a city with a large and rapidly growing Aboriginal population, most of whom want an education and the benefits that

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come with an education, but are simply not willing to give up what it means to be Aboriginal in order to get it.

All of this can best be understood by considering the extent to which colonialism has shaped, and continues to shape, the experience of Aboriginal people in Canada. Aboriginal peoples' resistance to schools is rooted in their resistance to colonialism.

What Aboriginal people have said to us about the educational system is not that Aboriginal people should be forced to change in order to 'succeed' in school, but rather that schools and the educational system generally should change in order to better reflect the demographic and cultural reality of our community.

Part Two

2.1 Colonialism and education

Since the Europeans' arrival in North America, Aboriginal people have been subjected to a process of colonialism. They were dispossessed of their lands, pushed onto reserves, subjected to the colonial control of the Indian Act, forced into residential schools. Colonialism involved the deliberate attempt to destroy Aboriginal peoples' economic and political systems and their cultures and religions, and to replace them with European institutions and values. This was, and for many Canadians still is, justified on the grounds that European institutions and cultural and religious values were and are superior to those of Aboriginal people. The resultant colonial ideology is all-pervasive. As Metis scholar Howard Adams puts it:

> "The characteristic form of colonialism then is a racial and economic hierarchy with an ideology that claims the superiority of the race and culture of the colonizer. This national ideology pervades colonial society and its institutions, such as schools, cultural agencies, the church and the media....the ideology becomes an inseparable part of perceived reality" (Adams, 1999, p. 6).

Aboriginal people themselves may come to believe the all-pervasive notion that they are culturally inferior. This is common amongst oppressed people. "In fact, this process happens so frequently that it has a name, *internalized oppression*" (Tatum, 1999, p.6). Or as Howard Adams puts it, many Aboriginal people "...have internalized a colonized consciousness" (Adams, 1999, Introduction). The results are devastating:

> "Once Aboriginal persons internalize the colonization processes, we feel confused and powerless.... We may implode with overwhelming feelings of sadness or explode with feelings of anger. Some try to escape this state through alcohol, drugs and/or other forms of self-abuse" (Hart, 2002, p. 27).

The link to educational attainment is clear:

> Aboriginal people start to believe that we are incapable of learning and that the colonizers' degrading images and beliefs about Aboriginal people and our ways of being are true (Hart, 2002, p.27).

A vicious cycle is created: the assumption of Aboriginal peoples' cultural inferiority, initially advanced as a means to justify the European domination of North America, becomes internalized by Aboriginal people themselves; in response, many Aboriginal people lash out in self-abusive ways; such behaviour then reinforces in the minds of the colonizers the assumptions of Aboriginal inferiority that lie at the heart of the colonial ideology. The more:

> "... Aboriginal people move further into internalizing the colonization processes, the more we degrade who we are as Aboriginal people. All of these internalized processes only serve the colonizers, who then are able to sit back and say 'see, we were right'. In colonizers' eyes, the usurpation is justified" (Hart, 2002, p. 28).

Education has historically played a central role in this process. The residential school was an "instrument of colonization" (Milloy, 1999, 254), rooted in the assumption of Aboriginal cultural inferiority. Aboriginal children were torn from their parents, and submitted to a deliberate and systematic attempt to strip them of their culture and their Aboriginal identity. The

process began when they arrived at the residential school, as described in this example referring specifically to the children of Cree families:

> "The transformation of Cree children began the moment of their arrival in the schools. Their identities were immediately physically altered as each child underwent a disrobing and received a thorough scrubbing and a haircut. Each child was then dressed in near-identical, European-Canadian-style, uniform-looking clothing that served to further strip any outward appearances of indigenous forms of individuality and cultural identity. Newly registered children were given Christian names, and the use of their traditional languages was forbidden. Behaviour was controlled by the application of numerous regulations, the regimentation of daily routines, and the administration of forms of punishment that were often unduly harsh, even for the standards of the time. Parents were discouraged from visiting their children to prevent their children from lapsing into traditional behaviour and to discourage homesickness" (Pettipas, 1994, p 80).

The point was to destroy Aboriginal cultures, " to kill the Indian in the child" (Milloy, 1999, 42), not only by what was done in the residential schools to Aboriginal children, but also by excluding the family and community as the means by which to pass on the culture."Through this system, the traditional role of the parents, relatives, and elders as producers and transmitters of culture and ideology was undermined" (Pettipas, 1994, 215). As one school leaver said to us at a focus group meeting, after saying that his wife and her entire family attended residential schools: "They took a lot of things from us". It was, as Milloy has described it, "...an act of profound cruelty rooted in non-Aboriginal pride and intolerance and in the certitude and insularity of purported cultural superiority" (Milloy, 1999, p. 302). Manitoba's Aboriginal Justice Inquiry called it: "a conscious, deliberate and often brutal attempt to force Aboriginal people to assimilate", and noted that now, "for the first time in over 100 years, many families are experiencing a generation of children who live with their parents until their teens" (quoted in Aboriginal Healing Foundation, May 2002, p. 2). The result was a "...loss of parenting skills through the absence of four or five generations of children from Native communities, and the learned behaviour of despising Native identity...." (Milloy, 1999, p. 299).

The residential schools were, for almost all Aboriginal children, horrific places. In addition to the loneliness that children would naturally suffer when separated from their families and communities, and the deliberate and relentless attempts to deny them their language, culture and spiritual beliefs, many suffered from hunger, overwork, and shockingly high rates of disease and death. In 1903 *Saturday Night* magazine reported that: "Even war seldom shows as high a percentage of fatalities as does the education system we have imposed on our Indian wards", and Duncan Campbell Scott, head of the federal Indian Department from 1913 to 1932, reported that "fifty percent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein" (Milloy, 1999, pp. 91 and 51).

Those few who survived and managed to graduate rarely got jobs anyway. "Employment was not readily available: indeed, one agent informed the Department:

January 7, 1998, the Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs, announced a Statement of Reconciliation to all Aboriginal people for the abuses in the residential schools:

"Sadly our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we can take pride....One aspect of our relationship with Aboriginal people that requires particular attention is the residential school system. This system separated many children from their parents and communities and prevented them from speaking their languages and from learning about their heritage and cultures. In the worst cases, it left legacies of personal pain and distress that continue to reverberate in Aboriginal communities. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry". (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, May, 2002, p. 9).

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'Race prejudice is against them [the graduates] and I am afraid it will take time....'" (Milloy, 1999, 158). Another account reports the same: "For the students who did manage to complete their school terms, there was little to look forward to either in white society or on their home reserves. Because of the poor quality of education and the racial prejudice of white employers, there were few employment opportunities for graduates beyond the seasonal casual jobs already open to their parents" (Pettipas, 1994, p. 81). Schooling, for most Aboriginal people, produced little other than pain, in return for which it produced no long-term gain. School was a losing proposition.

The result, the *only* rational result, has been a legacy of ill-feelings directed by Aboriginal people at the Canadian educational system. Nor is this simply an artifact of a distant past. The residential school experience "...is an intergenerational experience, one that didn't stop with one student, but affected every generation and each of us in the Indian community at a profound and personal level" (Deiter, 1999, 5).

> "Because so many generations attended residential schools they have affected all First Nations individuals. For example, even though I was raised in the city, all my family members, including my parents, my grandparents, uncles, and aunts on both sides of the family attended these schools. Most of my friends also attended the schools, including my husband and cousins. As well, all of the people whom my parents associated with during my formative years were residential school survivors" (Deiter, 1999, p. 23).

This is consistent with what we found in our interviews of current Aboriginal students, more than one-half of whom have at least one parent or grandparent who attended residential school. It is also consistent with the personal experience of three of the four authors of this paper, two of whom are themselves residential school survivors.

The result has been, in some cases, that the negative experiences associated with school are passed on from generation to generation:

> "Individuals who were subjected to the church-run residential school system would, in all likelihood, view formal education as having very little relevance to them, and indeed, may have grown to fear and despise this method of learning as a result. Transmission of such fear and loathing for education may also create the same opinions in offspring and thus attitudes become intergenerational" (Brade, 2001, p. 58).

It is important, we think, to recognize that the response to the residential schools by Aboriginal students was not passive acceptance. On the contrary, there was resistance, frequent multi-faceted resistance, and this active opposition to the imposition of an alien, European-based educational system has also become part of the legacy of the residential schools, passed on from generation to generation. As one Aboriginal author observes, based on her interviews with residential school survivors: "I believe the resistance stories that have filtered through these interviews embody the spirit and courage of the children who attended these schools. The resistance was so constant that many of the acts were not even recognized by the interviewees themselves" (Deiter, 1999, p. 71). These stories of resistance included, for example, a 1962 riot by Aboriginal students at the Edmonton Indian Residential School over living conditions and the treatment of the students (Deiter, 1999, p.4; see also Grant, 1996, pp. 216-220). The stories:

> "...included runaway boys trapping food to supplement their meagre meals and girls climbing out of third-storey windows to freedom. They were burning schools and defiantly challenging their oppressors. There were also the passive, subversive methods of resistance. In the early part of this century, a

> sign language developed that became a standardized method of communication for all schools across the country. The elements of these resistance stories are as poignant as any story of resistance by an oppressed people. What makes these stories and the people who lived them even more courageous was that these acts of resistance were carried out by children" (Deiter, 1999, p. 73).

There is a long and honourable history of oppressed peoples resisting the control of their captors (van Onselen, 1976, and Genovese, 1974). Canada takes pride, for example, in being the destination of many African-American slaves who were fleeing their captors by taking the 'underground railway' in search of freedom. But Canada's police force relentlessly hunted down Aboriginal children who had escaped their residential school captors. And Beatrice Culleton has vividly described how Aboriginal children who are wards of the state are captured and taken back to their foster homes by the RCMP (Culleton, 1984). This description of a runaway being returned to a residential school from which he had fled sounds similar to what we know of courageous slaves who faced the dangers of running for their freedom.

> "He was eleven years old when he ran away. When he was caught, he was escorted back to the school by the RCMP on the train in handcuffs. The penalty for runaways was either a strapping, having your head shaved, or both. It was common practice to have the RCMP bring back runaways" (Deiter, 1999, p. 74).

The same was the case in the USA. Referring to Aboriginal resistance to residential schools there, one author says: "While some cooperated with the educational programs, others resisted. In the latter instance, arson, running away from school, and subtle forms of passive resistance all proved effective" (Adams, 1988, p.27, fn. 80).

The resistance by Aboriginal children and youth to their being held captive in white-controlled schools is a part of an honourable tradition of courage and determination, and ought to be *celebrated* as such. It, too, is part of the legacy of the residential school system.

Nor, we believe, is the resistance confined to the past. It resonates today in the resistance of Aboriginal children and youth to schools which do not sufficiently reflect and honour their culture. We believe that many Aboriginal students today continue to resist the imposition upon them of a white-controlled school system which they experience as alien to their values and beliefs. That resistance, that refusal to be 'educated' when being educated means giving up so much of themselves, is expressed in a variety of ways, many of which are not immediately apparent as forms of resistance, nor even consciously undertaken as forms of resistance. The resistance may take the form of a simple disengagement from school, or may be "...masked as attendance problems, acting out, discipline, or even learning problems" (Fine, 1994, 177). We believe that in many cases Aboriginal children are not so much failing in school, as *choosing*, consciously or unconsciously, not to succeed in school.

In a well-known paper in the *Harvard Educational Review*, Signithia Fordham makes this case with respect to African-American students in the USA. "At the heart of this paper is the struggle that Black adolescents face in having to 'choose' between the individualistic ethos of the school—which generally reflects the ethos of the dominant society—and the collective ethos of their community". This, Fordham hypothesizes, applies to all subordinated peoples: "...the desire to succeed—as defined by the dominating population—causes subordinated peoples to seek social

> *"The major issues we face now are survival—how to live in the modern world. Part of this is how to remain Indian, how to assimilate without ceasing to be an Indian....Indians remain Indian, and against pretty good odds....Their languages are being lost at a tremendous rate, poverty is rampant, as is alcoholism. But still there are Indians, and the traditional world is intact. It's a matterof identity....I continue to think of myself as Indian....I think this is what most Indian people are doing today. They go off the reservation, but they keep an idea of themselves as Indians. That's the trick" (Momaday, 1991 p. 438).*

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distance from the group with which they are ethnically or racially identified". This is consistent with our findings—Aboriginal people experiencing the pain of being separated from their communities as the price of their individual 'success' in school—as reported earlier (see p. 29). She argues, as we do, that changes must be made to the educational system so that success means that Blacks can "...succeed as a *people*, not just as individual Blacks" (Fordham, 1988, p.55). This can only be done if succeeding in school does not mean denying one's culture (See sidebar, p. 35). Schools must therefore be decolonized.

What Aboriginal people want, and what is clearly expressed in our interview results, has been stated repeatedly for at least three decades by Aboriginal people. In their seminal work in 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood, forerunners of the Assembly of First Nations , said this: "What we want for our children can be summarized very briefly: to reinforce their Indian identity [and] to provide the training necessary for making a good living in modern society" (NIB, 1972, p.3). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples said the same. Aboriginal people want education "...to prepare them to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society", and at the same time, "...education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations..." (Canada, 1996, 433-45).

Our educational system as currently structured is not doing this. It is not that Aboriginal students are failing. It is that the system is not meeting their needs as described above. The system is still a colonial system. Aboriginal educator Marie Battiste calls it racist, a form of cultural racism: "Cognitive imperialism, also known as cultural racism, is the imposition of one worldview on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to the alternative worldview" (Battiste, 2000, p.193). A current textbook on multicultural education advances the same view: "...in practice, the knowledge being disseminated is skewed toward perpetuating the worldview and interests of the dominant group in power. That is, our institutions and educational system tend to propagate a worldview that is predominantly Eurocentric, Judeo-Christian, middle-class, white, and male" (Gnosh, 2002, p. vii). This has a damaging effect on students, including Aboriginal students, who do not fit this profile:

> "If a school curriculum denigrates one's ancestors, religion, and contributions to the history of the human race, and denies one's full dignity—that is, if it teaches the superiority of one segment of a democratic society over others—it is damaging to the minds and spirits of all children: those taught that their cultures are secondary and those given the false security of believing they are creators of culture. An equitable curriculum must affirm all people as creators of culture and honor the multiplicity of human efforts to come to terms with living on earth" (Kohl, 1994, p.95).

The well-known Aboriginal educator, Verna Kirkness, argues similarly that the abandonment of the residential schools and the integration of Aboriginal students into the regular school system has not worked. She argues that: " This program has not been one of true integration where the different cultures are recognized; rather it has been a program of assimilation where First Nation students are absorbed into the dominant society" (Kirkness, 1992, p. 14). The schools continue to be colonial in character, and to express colonial power relations: "Since colonial education includes the active construction of power relations of domination and subordination, it also always involves control of the schooling process by the dominating culture, in this case a white dominating culture. This domination is represented visually to students and the community in the fact that teachers and administrators are primarily white" (Carlson, 1997, p. 144). And Aboriginal students resist.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples described the continued colonial character of our schools, and the impact this has on Aboriginal people. "In public schools, the absence of

support for Aboriginal identities is overwhelming: no Aboriginal high school teachers; only a limited curriculum dealing with contemporary Aboriginal languages, cultures, history and political issues; an emphasis on intellectual cognitive achievement at the expense of spiritual, social and physical development; and the marginalization of youth in decision-making about their education". The result is that: "...the schooling system typically erodes identity and self-worth. Those who continue in Canada's formal education system told us of regular encounters with racism, racism expressed not only in interpersonal exchanges but also through the denial of Aboriginal values, perspectives and cultures in the curriculum and the life of the institution" (Canada, 1996, p.434). Tatum argues similarly, defining racism as: "A system of advantage based on race". As such, it is more than a simple and simplistic expression of prejudice: "...racism, like other forms of oppression, is not only a personal ideology based on racial prejudice, but a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals. In the context of the United States, this system clearly operates to the advantage of Whites and to the disadvantage of people of colour" (Tatum, 1999, p.7). The same can be said of Aboriginal people in Canada, and in Canadian schools.

The impact of such a school system in terms of students' identity and self-worth has been described by Beverly Tatum in her powerful analysis of the experience of African-American students in a US school system that does not positively reflect who they are. Her analysis applies to Aboriginal students in Winnipeg. Tatum examines the process of 'racial identity development', seeking "an understanding of racial identity, the meaning each of us has constructed or is constructing about what it means to be a white person or a person of colour in a race-conscious society". She adds: "It is because we live in a racist society that racial identity has as much meaning as it does" (Tatum, 1999, p. xviii. See also Carter, 1997, p.198). "Why do black youths, in particular, think about themselves in terms of race? Because that is how the rest of the world thinks of them. Our self-perceptions are shaped by the messages that we receive from those around us" (Tatum, 1999, p.53-54). When young people ask, "Who am I? The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am. Who do my parents say I am? Who do my peers say I am? What message is reflected back to me in the faces and voices of my teachers, my neighbours, store clerks? What do I learn from the media about myself? How am I represented in the cultural images around me? Or am I missing from the picture altogether?" (Tatum, 1999, p.18).

In the case of Aboriginal people, they are often missing or largely missing from the picture. A recent, detailed study of the representation of Aboriginal people in the media, for example, found that in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and on the major television channels available in Winnipeg during prime time viewing hours, and on televised news coverage, Aboriginal people are represented far less than their proportion of Winnipeg's and Manitoba's population would warrant, and when they are present in the media, they are often portrayed in a negative manner (Mackenzie, forthcoming). We believe that the message that is reflected back to Aboriginal people by the media, is similar to the message reflected back to Aboriginal students when they walk into Winnipeg inner city high schools—namely that Aboriginal people are present as teachers and administrators and office staff and custodial staff in numbers far less than their share of the population. The result is that schools look and feel like alien places to Aboriginal students.

If the educational system is not de-colonized, then we believe that Aboriginal people will continue to resist. The resistance, as argued earlier, will take many different forms, including 'behavioural problems', to which schools respond in a variety of ways, including placing students in special education programs. A recent study for the Department of Education in British Columbia, titled *Over-Representation of Aboriginal Students Reported With Behaviour Disorders*, observed that:

> "Over-representation of Aboriginal students in populations of students with special needs has been well documented both in research literature and in the data collected by the Ministry of Education of British Columbia in its student-level data collection system. This over-representation is greatest in the area of behaviour disorders where the reported incidence among Aboriginal students in British Columbia is approximately 3.5 times that of the general K-12 student population" (British Columbia, 2001, p.1).

Many of our interviewees made reference to disciplinary problems leading them or other Aboriginal students they knew to be placed in a 'special education' class, or what several referred to as the 'rubber room'. This phenomenon was also referred to by the student and school leaver focus groups. The results are likely to be devastating in the long run.

> "The segregation of students in special education classes has lifetime consequences for students. Not only are they likely to remain branded as underachievers permanently, but that stigma affects their self-concept and identity, which, in turn, may be expressed through socially unacceptable behaviour" (Gnosh, 2002, p. 73).

Resistance to a colonial educational system will also continue to take the more mundane form of continued higher than average rates of 'failure' and 'dropping out'. In many, perhaps most, of these cases, what is expressed in the dominant discourse as 'failure' or 'drop-out', would more usefully be thought of as the continuation of a long history of Aboriginal people resisting a colonial educational system which denigrates and seeks to eliminate their culture.

This resistance to school has been documented over and over again in the US. It often takes the form of an active refusal to learn. Tatum, for example, referring to Black youth, says that:

> "...the anger and resentment that adolescents feel in response to their growing awareness of the systematic exclusion of Black people from full participation in US society leads to the development of an oppositional social identity. This oppositional stance both protects one's identity from the psychological assault of racism and keeps the dominant group at a distance" (Tatum, 1999, p. 60. See also, Massey and Denton, 1993, pp. 8,13,167).

Similarly, Herbert Kohl, in an article titled *I Won't Learn From You: Confronting Student Resistance*, describes this phenomenon as being an active and deliberate process of 'not-learning':

> "To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not-learn and reject their world" (Kohl, 1994, pp. 134-135).

It is our view that this is precisely what many Aboriginal students are doing. Fordham and Ogbu describe a similar process, saying that Black and Latino youth, for example:

> "... regard certain forms of behaviour and certain activities or events, symbols, and meanings as *not appropriate* for them because those behaviours, events, symbols and meanings are characteristic of white Americans. At the same time they emphasize other forms of behaviour as more appropriate for them because they are *not* a part of white Americans' way of life. To behave in the manner defined as falling within a white cultural frame of reference is to 'act white' and is negatively sanctioned" (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 181).

This, they argue, applies to school:

> "...the perceptions and interpretations are a part of a cultural orientation toward schooling which exists within the minority community and which

> evolved during many generations when white Americans insisted that minorities were incapable of academic success, denied them the opportunity to succeed academically, and did not reward them adequately when they succeeded" (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 183).

This analysis can be seen as linked to the internalization of colonialism, described earlier:

> "White Americans traditionally refused to acknowledge that black Americans are capable of intellectual achievement, and ...black Americans subsequently began to doubt their own intellectual ability, began to define academic success as white people's prerogative, and began to discourage their peers, perhaps unconsciously, from emulating white people in academic striving, ie., from 'acting white'" (Steinberg, 1996, p. 160).

Steinberg (1996, p.160) added: "We heard variations on the 'acting white' theme many, many times over the course of our interviews with high school students". McWhorter, writing from a much more conservative perspective, says much the same: "Centuries of abasement and marginalization led African Americans to internalize the way they were perceived by the larger society, resulting in a postcolonial inferiority complex" (McWhorter, 2001, p. 27). And this links to the school:

> "Students whose lives are not affirmed by the establishment seem intuitively not to accept hegemonic content and methods of instruction. They often resist, consciously or unconsciously, covertly as well as overtly (Friedel, 1999, p. 153)."

The same is certainly the case for Aboriginal students. As one scholar recently put it:

> "For most Indian students , now as in the past hundred years, Indian education means the education of Indians by non-Indians using non-Indian methods. Far too few Indian students have contact with Indian educators who are attuned to their culture and who can serve as models of educational achievement....The failure of non-Native education of Natives can be read as the success of Native resistance to cultural, spiritual, and psychological genocide" (Hampton, 1995, pp.6-7).

John Bryde described this process as one of "...a general and intangible passive resistance..." (Bryde, 1970, p. 20). Graveline calls it "everyday resistance" (Graveline, 1998, p. 22). There is a case to be made for seeing this resistance as an admirable thing. Herbert Kohl, in describing it, quoted Martin Luther King Jr., on being 'maladjusted'—on the importance of not adjusting oneself to racism and discrimination, to which we would add, the importance of not adjusting oneself to an educational system which disrespects one's culture:

> "Modern psychology has a word that is probably used more than any other word. It is the word 'maladjusted'. Now we all should seek to live a well-adjusted life in order to avoid neurotic and schizophrenic personalities. But there are some things within our social order to which I am proud to be maladjusted and to which I call upon you to be maladjusted. I never intend to adjust myself to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to mob rule. I never intend to adjust myself to the tragic effects of the methods of physical violence and to tragic militarism. I call upon you to be maladjusted to such things" (quoted in Kohl, 1994, p.129).

Aboriginal students are 'maladjusted' in this rational and admirable way, and we should stop trying to change them, and start adjusting—de-colonizing—our educational system.

Though relatively few Aboriginal students might define it as such, the school system continues to be part of the colonial apparatus, and continues to embody the assumptions of Aboriginal cultural inferiority that are the bedrock of the colonial ideology. Many students have internalized those colonial values. Professor Yatta Kanu, who has studied teacher-Aboriginal student interactions in an inner city classroom, says of the Aboriginal students: "They are still living the experience of colonialism" (Kanu, personal communication, June 5, 2002). It is simply a part of the fabric of our culture, so all-pervasive that we take it to be 'natural'. Thus we come full circle, to the interpretation advanced by Howard Adams, cited above: "This national ideology pervades colonial society and its institutions, such as schools, cultural agencies, the church and the media....the ideology becomes an inseparable part of perceived reality" (Adams, 1999, p. 6).

The colonial assumption of Aboriginal cultural inferiority still pervades our institutions, and has in fact been internalized by many Aboriginal people themselves...

As an "inseparable part of perceived reality", this colonial ideology with its built-in assumptions about cultural superiority and inferiority is not generally seen by non-Aboriginal people. It is a taken-for-granted, assumed part of what is taken to be 'reality'. The same is the case, for example, with what an African-American scholar calls cultural racism--- it is just there, so all pervasive that it may not be seen: " Cultural racism—the cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of people of colour—is like smog in the air. Sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in"(Tatum, 1999, p.6). The same is the case with the colonial ideology. Non-Aboriginal people seldom see it. It is not, for example, something that is taught in schools, nor is it part of the general discourse of day-to-day life. As Aboriginal scholar Michael Hart puts it: "...the colonizer has no idea about the reality of the oppressed. It is not incorporated as part of any curriculum; nor is it truly recognized as part of Aboriginal students' experiences"(Hart, 2002, p. 29). Instead of seeing poverty and violence and suicide, as well as Aboriginal students' experiences in school, as a function of the collective, historical and contemporary experience of Aboriginal people with colonialism, "Amer-Europeans reinterpret these understandings through an ahistorical , reductionist stance; they break the issues down to an individual's problem and ignore the historical roots..." (Hart, 2002, p. 30).

The result, we hypothesize, is that many Aboriginal students are, quite naturally, disengaged from the school system, and some, perhaps many, carry on the tradition of active resistance to a white-controlled school system with its colonial assumptions of Euro-Canadian cultural superiority.

Colonialism is at the root of the problem. The colonial assumption of Aboriginal cultural inferiority still pervades our institutions, and has in fact been internalized by many Aboriginal people themselves, and it finds expression in self-destructive acts that serve to reinforce and justify, in the minds of those who do not understand the history of colonialism, the deeply-rooted assumption of Aboriginal inferiority.

The solution, it follows, is to de-colonize ourselves. Aboriginal scholars and community leaders are "... demanding a 'de-colonization of Aboriginal education'" (Binda, 2001; Kirkness, 1998). For this to happen, our school system must abandon the assumption, implicit in so much that is taught in our schools, that Aboriginal culture is inferior. It is the schools, historical purveyors of the myth of Aboriginal cultural inferiority, which must now become truly multicultural. "Education systems must teach the people's own histories, ways of knowing and learning, languages, literature, arts and sciences...." (Hart, 2002, p.33).

But for this to happen much will have to change, not only in our schools, but also in those institutions—our faculties of education—where students are taught to be teachers. For as Michael Hart(2002, p.34) observes, and as numerous of our community respondents stated in

similar language: "If resistance and decolonization involves coming to know ourselves, our histories and our worldviews, how can we expect to develop this knowledge by relying upon the very people, regardless of their altruism, who oppress these aspects of our being?" What this means in practical terms is more Aboriginal teachers, and in particular, more Aboriginal teachers able to teach in a decolonized fashion. This is what our respondents called for.

However, as we will show in the next section, despite the need and the demand for more Aboriginal teachers, the means by which to produce them is not now in place, nor is there planning underway to rectify this problem.

2.2 Aboriginal teachers and teacher training

There is a clearly expressed demand from the Aboriginal community for more Aboriginal teachers. This came out clearly in our interviews, with well over 90% of those interviewed saying that they think there should be more Aboriginal teachers and that more Aboriginal teachers would make a difference. The Hawthorne report of 1966 stressed the importance of more Aboriginal teachers. In 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood, in the seminal *Indian Control of Indian Education*, called for more Aboriginal teachers. *The Report of the Task Force on Race Relations to the Board of Trustees of Winnipeg School Division No. 1*, in July 1989, called for "...extraordinary measures... to address the historical blocks which have discriminated against Aboriginal peoples in their attempts to educate their children", and the Task Force "...agreed that special initiatives should be undertaken to hire Aboriginal peoples" (Winnipeg, July 1, 1989, pp. 21 and 23). The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples observed that "The training of Aboriginal teachers has been a top priority for Aboriginal people since the 1960s when they began to lobby for programs that would bring Aboriginal people into the classroom" (Canada, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 491). The RCAP referred to jurisdictions that had established targets for the hiring of Aboriginal teachers, and to the requirement in Saskatchewan for the establishment of an action plan in Aboriginal education, including measures to hire more Aboriginal teachers, in those school divisions where 5 % or more of the population is Aboriginal, and recommended more governmental financial support to post-secondary institutions for existing and new Aboriginal teacher education programs (Canada, 1996, Vol. 3, pp. 491 and 493. See also Kirkness, 1992, p.4).

Any call for more Aboriginal teachers would certainly apply to Winnipeg, which has more Aboriginal people than any other Canadian city, and would particularly apply to Winnipeg's inner city, where 60% of Winnipeg's Aboriginal people reside. Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has tried to respond to the demand for more Aboriginal teachers and more Aboriginal staff. In fact, the Division considers itself to be a leader in Canada in responding to the needs of Aboriginal students. The Division has taken a number of important steps. These include the establishment of an Aboriginal high school, Children of the Earth, and an Aboriginal elementary school, Niji Mahkwa; the establishment of several alternative school settings intended to assist Aboriginal students to remain in school, including Wi Wabagooni, an off-site program of Victoria Albert school for grades 3-6, Songide'ewin Alternative Program, an off-site program of Niji Mahkwa for Aboriginal high school students, and Eagles Circle, an off-site program of Hugh John MacDonald school for 25 Aboriginal students; the development of an accelerated program to get more Aboriginal teachers into administrative positions in schools; the hiring of Aboriginal Support Workers attached to 12 inner city schools, each on a half-time basis, to bridge the divide between schools and community and to encourage parental involvement; the preparation of considerable curriculum material with Aboriginal content; since 1994/95 the funding of two Aboriginal Curriculum Development positions to develop additional units with Aboriginal content; and the hiring of an Aboriginal consultant (Schubert, April 1, 2002). It is notable that Winnipeg's Aboriginal community mounted a determined and

very effective campaign for educational improvements in the late 1980s-early 1990s, as a result of which many of the changes enumerated above were made.

However, Aboriginal people are still significantly under-represented in the School Division's overall staff, and especially in its teaching staff. In 1999-2000, out of a total of 2023 teachers in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, only 112, or 5.6%, were Aboriginal (Schubert, April 1, 2002, pp. 1 and 2). Winnipeg School Division No. 1 estimates that 25% of its students are Aboriginal, and as observed earlier, this proportion is growing. Thus in cultural terms, the teaching staff does not at all reflect the students being taught. For the number of Aboriginal teachers to be proportionate to the number of Aboriginal students three years ago, in 1999-2000, Winnipeg School Division No. 1 would have needed approximately 400 more Aboriginal teachers than were working in the Division at that time.

There is, in principle, an opportunity now to rectify the under-representation of Aboriginal teachers in Winnipeg School Division No. 1. As of 1999-2000, more than one-third (36%) of the teachers in Winnipeg No. 1 were over 50 years of age (Leadership in Education Accountability Dialogue, 2001), and so there is likely to be significant demand in the near future to replace large numbers of retiring teachers. This would be an excellent opportunity to change the face of the teaching staff in the Division to more closely resemble the student body, by hiring a large number of Aboriginal teachers.

Regrettably, this is not likely to happen. To our knowledge there is no plan in place to produce the large numbers of Aboriginal teachers that are needed. A major part of the problem lies with the Faculties of Education at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, although in fairness they are aware of the problem but unable to respond adequately for want of financial resources. We examined the Faculties of Education at Brandon University, the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, in order to determine the extent to which their programs are geared to producing Aboriginal teachers, and more broadly, the extent to which these programs reflect the needs of Aboriginal people. What we found is cause for concern.

There are teacher education programs at both Brandon University (BU) and the University of Winnipeg (UW) which are aimed, in large part, at producing Aboriginal teachers.

At BU there is the Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP), and the Program for the Education of Native Teachers (PENT). Approximately 90% of the graduates of BUNTEP, and all of the graduates of PENT, are Aboriginal. The number of students in BUNTEP varies from year to year, but generally the number of students in each year of the program is from 200 to 350, while in PENT there are generally about 150 students at any given time. These are community-based programs, that is, they deliver teacher training to northern Manitobans and especially northern Aboriginal people in the communities where the students reside. BUNTEP has had programs in a large number of northern Manitoba communities since it began in 1974, and together with PENT has produced more than 750 teachers, most of them Aboriginal (McAlpine, 2001, p.110). PENT is aimed at Aboriginal people already working in schools as para-professionals. It combines 50 months of internship in the schools where they are working, with summer courses at BU. "As students progress through the program, they are expected to assume greater responsibilities for planning and teaching. PENT students start by teaching small groups, and then progress to teaching entire classes" (BU Faculty of Education website). A model that enables Aboriginal teaching assistants to gain credits for their practical experience in the schools ought to be considered for Winnipeg, and we will return to this in our recommendations. However, as effective as BUNTEP and PENT may be in producing Aboriginal teachers, it does not help Winnipeg, because few of their graduates come to Winnipeg to teach. The overwhelming majority of these teachers, almost all, take up teaching positions in northern or rural Manitoba communities.

In Winnipeg, the UW runs the inner city teacher education program at the Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC). This program, delivered partly off-campus, is aimed at students who are at least 21 years of age, who are representative of the inner city population, and who need academic, personal and financial support in order to complete a university teacher education program. The program is effective. But it is so small that it cannot possibly meet the demand for Aboriginal teachers. The annual intake is generally 18 to 20 students. In some years the proportion who are Aboriginal may be as high as 60-70%. The retention rate is high. But even if we were to assume a 100% retention rate and a student body 70% of whom are Aboriginal, this would only produce approximately 14 new Aboriginal teachers per year, which is just over one-half of one percent of the 2023 teachers employed in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 alone in 1999-2000. Three years ago, in 1999-2000, WSD No. 1 would have needed an additional 400 Aboriginal teachers to make the proportion of teachers who were then Aboriginal equivalent to the proportion of students who were then Aboriginal. At its current maximum rate of approximately 14 new Aboriginal teachers per year, it would take WEC almost 30 years to turn out 400 Aboriginal teachers, and by then the proportion of students who are Aboriginal will be closer to 50% than 25%. In short, the Winnipeg Education Centre, effective and important though it is, cannot by itself and at its current size, produce nearly enough Aboriginal teachers to increase the proportion of teachers in Winnipeg who are Aboriginal to the extent that is needed.

The major Faculties of Education, in terms of student numbers, are at the University of Manitoba and the main campus of the University of Winnipeg. The Faculty of Education at the UM has almost 1300 students if full-time and part-time, undergraduate and graduate students are included, and the Faculty of Education at the UW has approximately 1000 students. However, the numbers of Aboriginal students training to be teachers at the two main campuses is minuscule. At the UM, where a new Dean has recently been appointed, we were told that when the university's Aboriginal Student Liaison conducted incoming Aboriginal students on a campus tour, the Faculty of Education was not included, because "there is nothing in the building for them" (Wiens, May 8, 2002). The incoming Dean, John Wiens, has told us that he very quickly noticed that Aboriginal people had "no kind of visible presence" in the Faculty of Education. As a result, he has taken a number of steps. He has established a Dean's Aboriginal Student Recruitment Task Force; is seeking to hire two Aboriginal faculty members (there are currently no permanent, full-time Aboriginal teaching staff in the UM Faculty of Education); and has written to the Minister of Education seeking approval to make Native Studies a 'teachable' subject, so that students with an academic knowledge of Aboriginal issues, and hopefully more Aboriginal students, would enter the Faculty of Education. At present, however, there are few Aboriginal students in the Faculty of Education, there has been no plan in recent years to recruit Aboriginal students to the Faculty of Education, there are no permanent Aboriginal faculty members in the Faculty of Education, and there are almost no courses offered in the Faculty with an Aboriginal focus. There is a community-based education program leading to a B. Ed. run in several northern communities by the UM Continuing Education, but like BUNTEP and PENT at Brandon University, it produces teachers, including Aboriginal teachers, who end up working in northern Manitoba, not in Winnipeg. At the moment, the UM Faculty of Education is contributing almost nothing to solving the problem of the shortage of Aboriginal teachers in Winnipeg. It is to be hoped that the initiatives being taken by the new Dean, together with his stated commitment (Wiens, May 8, 2002) to have one in six or one in five of the Faculty of Education student body be Aboriginal students in five or perhaps ten years time, will bear fruit.

The University of Winnipeg Faculty of Education has an inner city mandate. The Faculty is doing a great deal of innovative work in preparing students to teach in the inner city. There are several courses offered with specifically inner city content. Every student must complete at least one student placement in an inner city school or a school with inner city characteristics. There

are opportunities for students to participate in various inner city community outreach programs run by faculty members. And, remarkably, every single faculty member has contributed to a soon-to-be-released book on inner city education. This is a faculty with energy and a commitment to inner city education.

Manitoba is considerably behind other, neighbouring provinces in putting in place the means by which to produce Aboriginal teachers.

However, the Aboriginal content in the program is sorely absent, despite the obviously high and growing proportion of inner city students who are Aboriginal, and despite the Faculty's inner city mandate. In the 22 pages given over to describing the UW Faculty of Education program in the 2002-2003 University of Winnipeg Academic Calendar, the word 'Aboriginal' is mentioned but once. This is in the title of a new course called "Aboriginal Issues in Education", offered in the Sociology Department and available as an option to Education students. There are two optional courses in Aboriginal languages, one in Cree and one in Ojibwa. There are no required courses with a focus that is exclusively or even primarily Aboriginal. There are multicultural courses, but these are not the same at all as courses with a focus on Aboriginal content. Nor are there any courses on racism, or anti-racist education. There are no permanent, full-time Aboriginal faculty members on staff. There are very few Aboriginal students among the Education student body (two of the University's Aboriginal Student Advisors told us in May, 2002, that they knew of either 6 or 7 Aboriginal students in the Faculty of Education), there is no specific program in place for recruiting Aboriginal students to the Faculty of Education, and no spaces in the Faculty are reserved for Aboriginal students. These are serious shortcomings for a Faculty of Education with an inner city mandate.

The Faculty of Education observes that their finances are stretched to the limit, simply in keeping together the program that is already in place, and this is no doubt true. Further, if additional Aboriginal students were to be recruited to the Faculty of Education, the infrastructure that would be needed to provide supports to these students is simply not adequate. There is a very fine Aboriginal Student Services Staff (as is the case at the University of Manitoba), but their numbers are small, the demands on their time are already difficult to manage, and many of the important initiatives that they are undertaking or planning to undertake for the purpose of providing needed supports to Aboriginal students are funded by 'soft money', or are as yet not funded at all. Unlike the University of Manitoba and Brandon University, the University of Winnipeg does not receive Access funding from the provincial government, despite the Faculty of Education's inner city mandate. It is clear that the University of Winnipeg Faculty of Education is not contributing to solving the problem of the shortage of Aboriginal teachers in Winnipeg.

This is a failing, at both the UM and the UW Faculties of Education, which simply must be addressed. To do so will require action by these academic bodies. But it will also require governments to take the initiative in developing a plan to produce Aboriginal teachers, and to make available the funding to make this possible.

Manitoba is considerably behind other, neighbouring provinces in putting in place the means by which to produce Aboriginal teachers.

The University of Saskatchewan's College of Education offers four programs designed to educate Aboriginal teachers: the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP); the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP); the Northwest Territories Teacher Education Program (NWTTEP); and the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP). The latter program, to take one example, has approximately 200 students enrolled, and accepts 55 new students per year. In June of 2002, in addition to the 55 new students enrolled, the program turned away 250 fully qualified prospective students due to lack of space. This suggests that there are steps that can be taken that will generate a significant supply of prospective Aboriginal teachers. In addition, 100% of the professors and instructors in the ITEP are Aboriginal.

The University of Regina, in cooperation with the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC), offers a B. Ed. Indian Education Program. The SIFC -Indian Education Statement says:

> "The SIFC Indian Education program...provides schemes of study in which the uniquely imaginative aspects of First Nations culture are integrated with the pedagogical concerns of modern practice. In pursuing a degree with our department, students receive a wide ranging university education valuable to the First Nation holistic perspective. At the same time students acquire skills needed to contribute to society as professionals in the area of Indian Education".

Numerous courses with a specifically Aboriginal focus are offered, and in addition the program offers a course called "Institutional Racism". According to the course description, this course deals with "...how institutional racism affects schooling practices", and in the course "different forms of racism are presented and analyzed". The SIFC B.Ed. program had about 80 students in total in 2000, 80% of whom were Aboriginal, and 70% of the teaching staff are Aboriginal.

Aboriginal Education programs are offered elsewhere in Canada. Lakehead University runs a Native Teacher Education Program (NTEP). Courses with Aboriginal content are offered in order "to make teachers in training more aware of the particular circumstances of Aboriginal students..." (NTEP website). In the 2001/02 academic year there were 49 students in the NTEP, and in the Faculty of Education as a whole 62 of the 635 students, or 9.8%, were Aboriginal. Of the total staff of 30 in the Faculty of Education, 4 professors and 4 additional staff members were Aboriginal. The University of British Columbia has a Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP), with an off-campus component for the first three years of the five year program. It is an elementary education program only. Aboriginal studies courses are offered throughout the five year program. McGill has a large program; St. Francis Xavier and the University of New Brunswick have Aboriginal Education programs; Brock University offers a Native Teacher Education Program, and also a Bachelor of Education in Adult Education, one of the two streams of which is an Aboriginal stream designed by Aboriginal educators for Aboriginal teachers of adults and currently the only one of its kind in North America. Each of these programs offers numerous courses with a specifically Aboriginal content.

Unfortunately, with respect to the preparation of Aboriginal teachers to teach in Winnipeg, the city with the highest Aboriginal population in Canada, not nearly enough is being done to produce the very large numbers of Aboriginal teachers that are needed.

It is not just prospective Aboriginal teachers who need to be exposed to a curriculum that reflects the realities of Aboriginal peoples. Even if a major initiative is launched immediately to produce more Aboriginal teachers for Winnipeg, as we would hope will be the case, their numbers will grow relatively slowly and in the meantime the vast majority of teachers who are teaching Aboriginal children will continue to be non-Aboriginal people. Non-Aboriginal teachers need more exposure to the realities of Aboriginal life than they are currently getting in their teacher training programs. The social and economic structure of Manitoba is such that most white teachers will have had little direct exposure to Aboriginal people, and even those who are teaching Aboriginal students are likely to have little direct exposure outside the classroom to Aboriginal people. This case has been made with respect to White teachers and African-Americans in the USA, and we believe the argument advanced applies to Winnipeg and Aboriginal people:

> "Most white teachers were raised and educated in predominantly white communities. Their firsthand knowledge of communities of color and their cultures and histories are quite limited. The secondhand information they have received through textbooks, media and friends and family has often been distorted by the negative, stereotypical attitudes about people of color which are so pervasive in American culture" (Lawrence and Tatum, 1997, p.333).

Professor Yatta Kanu of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Education has studied teacher-student interactions, and particularly teacher-Aboriginal student interactions, at one of the Winnipeg inner city high schools whose students were included in our interviews. Kanu observes that: "The vast majority of teachers in these schools belong to the dominant mainstream culture. The lack of Aboriginal cultural knowledge among these teachers has generally resulted in pedagogical and interaction patterns that have resulted in negative learning experiences for Aboriginal students" (Kanu, 2002, p. 3). Kanu adds:

> "The inspiration for this study arose from my experience as a teacher educator consistently observing pre-service teachers from dominant Euro-Canadian culture in high school classrooms in Winnipeg using teaching processes and curriculum materials that either ignored the Aboriginal students in their classrooms, or encouraged minimal participation from them. From personal conversations I had with a number of these pre-service teachers, I learned that they did not possess the cultural knowledge needed to adapt classroom materials and processes to ensure meaningful participation for the Aboriginal students in their classrooms".

A current textbook on multicultural education, written by the Dean of the Faculty of Education at McGill University, says the same: "The curriculum initiatives in the school system are important, but no amount of curriculum material can make a significant difference if teachers do not have the knowledge and the proactive attitude necessary to change the status quo" (Gnosh, 2002, p. 87). There are teachers in Winnipeg's inner city who have this knowledge and this attitude. But they do not have the knowledge by virtue of their teacher training. The education that prospective teachers are getting at Manitoba Faculties of Education is not adequately preparing them to teach Aboriginal children, despite the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' observation that: "... it is incumbent upon teacher education programs to provide the sort of teacher preparation which teachers need in order to work successfully with Aboriginal students in Canada's public schools" (Canada, 1996). Failure to provide such an education for prospective teachers runs the risk of the reinforcement in the classroom of negative stereotypes:

> "...teachers are often not aware of the different ways in which they treat students, they may reflect the systemic discrimination of society and school cultures. Studies have shown that subtle and overt forms of discrimination result from teachers' attitudes because their lack of information leads them to make inappropriate assumptions about children of different racial groups. If they operate within a framework of stereotypes, teachers may equate minority students and poor performance, with the result that these students are over-represented in special education and lower-ability groups" (Gnosh, 2002, p. 100).

The Aboriginal students, school leavers and community members whom we interviewed were unmistakeably clear in saying that they believe there should be more Aboriginal teachers in Winnipeg high schools. However, the means by which to produce more Aboriginal teachers, and especially to produce enough Aboriginal teachers to enable Winnipeg schools to reflect the student body they serve, are simply not in place. Nor are most non-Aboriginal teachers-in-training being sufficiently exposed to the Aboriginal class and cultural realities that they will experience as teachers, particularly teachers in Winnipeg's inner city. Nor is there a plan in place to achieve these objectives. These failings in our teacher education programs must be rectified. We will make recommendations to this end in the final section of this paper.

2.3 Aboriginal curriculum

Those we interviewed—students, school leavers, community members—were almost unanimous in expressing the opinion that more Aboriginal content is needed in the curriculum, and that it would make a significant difference to Aboriginal students. Some steps have been taken in this direction, especially by Winnipeg School Division No. 1, as described earlier. But there are problems. Too often Aboriginal content is treated as an add-on, and amounts to little more than lip-service, as was stated emphatically by some of our respondents. There is evidence that this is the case generally, ie., that Aboriginal content tends to take the form of "add-on activities" (Banks, 1994). And where new Aboriginal content has been developed, it is not sufficiently used, because its use is voluntary and because most teachers are not sufficiently knowledgeable about Aboriginal cultures to be able to use it.

The goal must be, as stated by the Aboriginal Teachers Circle, "...the total integration of Aboriginal perspectives in all areas of the curriculum" (Fitznor, 1997). This is a challenging goal. It means acknowledging the legitimacy and the significance of Aboriginal culture, and moving it from the margins to the centre of the curriculum. This is an argument that has been advanced with respect to African-American and Hispanic students in the USA, an argument rooted in changing demographic realities:

> "...the populations of America's subordinated groups are changing the cultural landscapes of our urban centres. According to recent demographic projections, Blacks and Hispanics will constitute a decided majority in nearly one-third of the nation's 50 largest cities...and Blacks alone will be the major group in at least nine major cities....In this case, populations traditionally defined as the Other are moving from the margin to the centre and challenging the ethnocentric view that people of colour can be relegated to the periphery of everyday life" (Giroux, 1992, p. 111).

For this to happen, the dominant culture would have to give up something. As Noley has put it:

> "A movement toward a 'common culture' should mean that all groups would sacrifice a part of their cultures in order to meet all others at some point at which new norms would be established. What has occurred, however, is that small groups have been compelled to discard many aspects of their cultures in order to conform to a European-American mainstream....Schools clearly have been the instruments of assimilation in the twentieth century, and this is what American Indian people have nearly unanimously rejected" (Noley, 1994, p. 78).

Gnosh makes the same argument, from a multicultural perspective:

> "...multicultural education must be seen to be radically different from a framework in which students of difference equate the school curriculum and culture with the dominant culture privilege....This implies that the curriculum, methods of teaching and evaluation, and norms and standards of excellence must incorporate the worldviews, histories, and experiences of all children—dominant and minority—rather than only the dominant" (Gnosh, 2002, p.3).

This would mean, for example, fully integrating Aboriginal novelists, dramatists, and poets into the English literature curriculum; including Aboriginal perspectives and issues in the history and social studies curriculum—treaties, the Indian Act, residential schools, Oka, as well as the 'living culture' of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg today (for example, projects involving oral histories of Aboriginal communities) ; including Aboriginal perspectives on the relationship between humans and the environment in science and geography classes; and making use of elders-in-the-schools programs, Aboriginal artists-in-the-schools programs, Aboriginal guest

speakers, and Aboriginal films and film-makers. The possibilities for enriching the curriculum through the use of Aboriginal content and through the use of Aboriginal individuals drawn from the community are almost endless, but doing so requires teachers who are familiar with and comfortable with Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal people. Many Aboriginal people feel this is not now the case. As one of our community respondents put it at a focus group meeting, the school system "doesn't even have a first clue of who we are as a people". We were told of a case in a suburban Winnipeg high school, for example, at which some non-Aboriginal parents complained because a well-known book by an established Aboriginal author was being studied in English class. These parents insisted that the book, which is certainly appropriate for study in English classes, was not literary, and that such books should be confined to the school's Native Studies course. The divide separating the cultures has to be bridged:

> "The central challenge of educators is to find ways to build bridges of understanding between the often separate realities of Native people and mainstream society....Society in general does not know the historical perspective behind today's social reality....[similarly] many Native people know little about their own history and culture" (Douglas, 1987, p. 181).

It is possible to do this. Kohl points, for example, to Portland, Oregon, where:

> "...the entire school district has adopted an Afrocentric, multicultural curriculum that treats the history and culture of the United States from the perspective of all the peoples that made our nation. This is not merely a minor change in focus, but a fundamental rethinking about what we tell our children about who we are as a society" (Kohl, 1994, p.109).

Verna Kirkness argues that this is not what has been done in Canada. The integration of Aboriginal students into mainstream schools "...has not been one of true integration where the different cultures are recognized; rather it has been a program of assimilation where First Nation students are absorbed into the dominant society" (Kirkness, 1992, p.14). This strategy does not work. "Integration viewed as a one-way process is not integration, and will fail. In the past, it has been the Indian student who was asked to integrate, to give up his identity, to adopt new values and a new way of life. This restricted interpretation of integration must be radically altered if future education programmes are to benefit Indian children" (Kirkness, 1992, p.51). In 1988 the Assembly of First Nations completed a three volume study of Aboriginal education, called *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future*. Kirkness notes that "One of the most revealing facts found in the study was that after 16 years, many of the educational shortcomings identified in 1972 were still in existence. It pointed out that education programs to which Indians are exposed are predominantly assimilationist in the curriculum, learning materials, pedagogy, learning objectives and in the training of teachers and educational administrators" (Kirkness, 1992, p. 20). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, as already noted, found the same to be the case when they reported in 1996, and our respondents tell us that this continues to be the case today, in late 2002.

If as a society we were to re-think our schools, and commit ourselves to doing more than what we have just barely begun to do in the way of making them into places where Aboriginal people and Aboriginal cultures are experienced and celebrated, if we were to make our community's Aboriginal reality part of the air that we breathe in our schools, the results would be dramatic. When students from marginalized cultures see themselves and their values positively represented in the school, the impact is exceptional. Beverly Tatum, for example, observes that: "Time and again in the research interviews I conducted, Black students lamented the absence of courses in African American history or literature at the high school level and indicated how significant this new learning was to them in college, how excited and affirmed they felt by this newfound knowledge" (Tatum, 1999, p. 66). This has been the case, as reported to us, for many

Aboriginal people in Winnipeg who have attended university and studied Aboriginal history and culture. For many Aboriginal people, one of the authors of this study included, it is only when they get to university that they have the chance to be exposed to their history and culture and to the impact of colonialism. Learning about who they are, and how they came to be where they are today as the result of colonialism, is a liberating and empowering experience. This is the argument advanced so brilliantly by Paulo Friere. But not all Aboriginal people make it to university, and high schools should be doing for many Aboriginal students what certain university courses do for a few. This is a process of de-colonization, by which Aboriginal students come to know and to value themselves as Aboriginal people. This should be happening in our schools: "If children are taught to understand and value their culture, they will value themselves as human beings" (McCaskill, 1987, p. 168).

The presence of significant numbers of Aboriginal teachers in the schools, and the infusion or total integration of Aboriginal history and culture in the curriculum, would have a huge impact on Aboriginal students.

The presence of significant numbers of Aboriginal teachers in the schools, and the infusion or total integration of Aboriginal history and culture in the curriculum, would have a huge impact on Aboriginal students. They would see the world differently. Teaching from an Aboriginal cultural perspective "...creates a different view of the world as compared with an emphasis on white Anglo-American Protestant culture". It "...will completely change a student's view of the world" with the result that "...you see the movies differently, you see other people differently, you read books differently...in fact, nothing is as it was before your consciousness" (Spring, 1997, 114).

But now, Aboriginal people are scarcely present in the curriculum. They are largely invisible. Battiste (2000, p.198) quotes Adrienne Rich in *Invisibility in Academe*: "When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing". In the Canadian educational system today, Aboriginal people continue to be invisible. As Verna Kirkness describes it: "The materials and subjects used for teaching are largely designed for and by non-Aboriginal persons, with little or no regard for the cultures, histories and realities of Aboriginal life" (Kirkness, 1992, p. 94).

If we were to make the changes needed—including changes in curriculum and in teacher training—to achieve "the total integration of Aboriginal perspectives in all areas of the curriculum", as the Aboriginal Teachers Circle has called for, it is not only Aboriginal students who would benefit. The recognition and respectful treatment of Aboriginal culture would unleash an outburst of creativity in a city that will, in this century, increasingly become an Aboriginal city. Winnipeg could become a city unique in the world, a city characterized by a new and dynamic culture that includes, as a central and positive element, the Aboriginal cultures and peoples that are now so marginalized, and so frequently denigrated, in our communities and in our schools. Achieving this goal requires making bold changes in our school system and our teacher training institutions.

Part Three

3.1 Conclusions

The demographic data presented early in this paper provide evidence that dramatic shifts are underway in the socioeconomic structure and character of our city, and we believe that education will play a crucial role in determining whether we are successful in negotiating these shifts and upheavals. A recent Saskatchewan study, which calculated that by the year 2016, almost one-half (46.4%) of school-aged (5-17 years) children in the province will be Aboriginal, concluded that:

> "...the present era represents the birth pangs of an entirely new society, because it is witness to a kind of renegotiation of relations between the defining peoples. Further, it can be argued that the principle context of this new contact period is that of education. The role of the school, humble as this might sound, could not therefore be cast in a more dramatic light....The role the school plays will determine the future and destiny of our province.....An opportunity of greatest significance lies before us—nothing more and nothing less than the forging of a new society" (Tymckak, 2001, p.25).

The same can be said, we believe, for Manitoba and specifically for Winnipeg. Indeed, these shifts in demographic realities are taking place in many large cities across North America, where people of European descent have become or are becoming a minority. These demographic shifts have enormous implications for education—for how we construct the curriculum, how we train teachers, and who gets trained to be a teacher, for example. Giroux, writing about the USA, argues that "... the cultural landscapes of our urban centres..." are changing such that those peoples previously seen as 'the other' and confined to the margins of everyday life are moving to the centre (Giroux, 1992, p. 111). Schools must reflect these real-world changes.

In Winnipeg this means that schools must become more Aboriginal. We believe that this means very significant changes to the educational system as a whole. In our recommendations we will emphasize those changes in the educational system having to do especially with who is teaching and what is taught. These are changes, we believe, that are achievable within a reasonable time frame. But our immediate focus on teachers and curriculum should not be seen as detracting from our view that it is the system as a whole that needs to change to reflect changing demographic and cultural realities.

Many of the recommendations that we believe flow from our findings require action on the part of the provincial government, given that the provinces have the constitutional responsibility for education. Therefore, although our study focussed on Aboriginal students in Winnipeg inner city high schools, at least some of our recommendations have to be couched in terms of the province as a whole.

Our recommendations arise directly from what we have been told by Aboriginal high school students and school leavers and community members in the interview questionnaires and the focus groups, and are supported, we believe, by the considerable body of literature that now exists on Aboriginal education. Before setting out our recommendations, we want to make two preliminary observations.

First, there are four areas, in addition to those included in our recommendations, where we believe, based on our findings in this study, important changes could and should be made. We

are not including these in our recommendations because we want to focus on the recommendations that we believe to be of the highest priority. Nevertheless, we want to make very brief mention of these four areas because we believe they are worthy of further investigation and consideration. The first is the importance of those schools with significant numbers of Aboriginal students making extra, innovative efforts to reach out to Aboriginal parents, including efforts that reach the community as a whole, like community feasts, and including strategies that have been tried elsewhere that involve teachers going into the community to meet with parents in the parents' homes. The second is the importance of adult learner centres, given that Aboriginal people are more likely than non-Aboriginal people to return to school after the usual high school age, and given what appears to us, from our cursory observations of adult learner centres in the course of conducting this study, to be the high degree of effectiveness of at least some of these institutions. The third is the possibility of developing a community economic development strategy around inner city schools, by attaching to such schools early childhood education programs like Aboriginal Head Start, literacy programs for parents, and high quality after school programs, each with a hiring strategy aimed at employing more Aboriginal people. There is very strong evidence that these programs are educationally effective, and there is especially strong evidence that educational attainment is strongly correlated with socioeconomic status, and thus jobs. The fourth is the importance of developing the programs needed to enable more Aboriginal high school students than is now the case to find part-time jobs while still in school, given the evidence that Aboriginal students are much less likely to be employed while at school than non-Aboriginal students, and that many Aboriginal students would like to be employed but are having difficulty getting a first foot in the door in the labour market. It is our opinion that each of these four areas is important from an Aboriginal educational attainment point of view, and each is worthy of further investigation.

Second, the three broad recommendations that we do make—to turn out a great many more Aboriginal teachers, to add a considerable additional amount of Aboriginal content to the teacher training programs, and to integrate much more Aboriginal content into the existing high school curriculum—are listed as three separate recommendations, but are much better thought of as three inter-related parts of an integrated strategy, the ultimate goal of which is broad systemic change. Producing more Aboriginal teachers is useful in itself, but is much more effective if these Aboriginal teachers have come through a teacher training program which has provided them with an understanding of colonialism and the Aboriginal experience, and is much more effective if the curriculum these teachers are working with is infused with Aboriginal content. Similarly, infusing the high school curriculum with Aboriginal content is useful in itself, but is much more effective if those who teach it are knowledgeable about Aboriginal matters, and is more useful still if the number of teachers who are Aboriginal is proportionate to the number of students who are Aboriginal. Thus we see these three recommendations as an integrated package, and we see them as the achievable starting points for significant systemic change, the outcome of which would be an educational system in which Aboriginal cultures and people are fully acknowledged, respected, and represented.

We wish to add that we know that there have been many studies of Aboriginal education in the past, and relatively little action has resulted. The Auditor-General of Canada, for example, when reporting recently on the state of Aboriginal education in Canada, said the following:

> "According to one First Nations organization, education for First Nations has been studied for over 20 years. This includes at least 22 studies between 1991 and 1999 in one departmental region....None of the study reports that came to our attention was accompanied by a departmental implementation plan that identified how and by whom the necessary remedial action would be taken" (Canada, 2000, pp. 4-9, 4-10).

It is not within our mandate to identify how and by whom the necessary remedial action will be taken. It is, however, our task to set out what we believe, in broad terms, to be the necessary remedial action. In the following recommendations we seek to do that, by setting out the package of changes that we think, based on our interviews and the existing literature, is of the highest order of priority, and is the most likely to be achievable within a reasonable time frame.

3.2 Recommendations

In our discussions with the Aboriginal people whom we interviewed, many offered some variant of the view that 'the whole educational system needs to change'. We believe that there is a sense in which this is true. The educational system is not now meeting the needs of large numbers of Aboriginal students, and therefore it needs to be changed. The specific recommendations that follow are, in our view, the steps that are most likely to be achievable in the immediately foreseeable future, and that are most likely to lay the foundation for the kind of long-term systemic change that is needed if the educational needs of Aboriginal people are to be met. These changes must be implemented with the full participation of the authentic Aboriginal leadership, as has been recommended by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

RECOMMENDATION #1: The Centre for Urban Aboriginal Education

We recommend:

a. That in order to assist in the process of ensuring the timely implementation of these recommendations, and to ensure that the Aboriginal community has the organizational means by which to promote its educational interests and aspirations, there be established in Winnipeg a Centre for Urban Aboriginal Education.

b. That the Centre for Urban Aboriginal Education be:

i. an independent body;

ii. governed by the Aboriginal community;

iii. provided with a secure financial base;

iv. mandated to provide leadership and organizational capacity for the Aboriginal community in the on-going process of effecting positive changes to the educational system.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Aboriginal Teachers

We recommend:

a. That the provincial government, working closely with the Aboriginal community, immediately prepare and implement a plan designed to produce enough Aboriginal teachers that in 10 years from now, the proportion of teachers in all Winnipeg and all Manitoba school divisions who are Aboriginal will be at least equivalent to the proportion of students in those school divisions who are Aboriginal.

b. That the plan include at least the following measures:

i. That a specific and significant proportion of the spots in each year's incoming class in the Faculties of Education at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg be allocated to Aboriginal students. A version of this is done in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba, where 25% of incoming students each year must be Aboriginal, or immigrants, or people with disabilities. It is done at the Winnipeg Education Centre as well, where the incoming class must reflect the population of Winnipeg's inner city.

ii. That increased, targeted funding be made available to the Faculties of Education specifically to enable them to put in place the supports that would be needed to meet the academic needs of a significantly increased number of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal student counselling and advising services are already stretched to the limit at the two universities, so that to enable more Aboriginal students to graduate as teachers, more Aboriginal student services staff would be needed. For the University of Winnipeg Faculty of Education, this might best be done by extending the already proven Access model to the University of Winnipeg, since the UW does not now have specific funding for Access programming. The Access model is intended to provide access and necessary supports to those students—Aboriginal students included—who have historically been structurally excluded from university.

iii. That increased, targeted funding be made available to the Faculties of Education specifically to enable them to put in place the kind of aggressive recruitment strategy that would be needed to encourage much larger numbers of Aboriginal students to embark upon careers in education. This would require that Aboriginal staff from the two Faculties of Education or from Aboriginal Student Support Services go into rural and city high schools and elementary schools to talk about the value of teaching as a career, and the opportunities available for Aboriginal students in education. It may also require the development of various strategies—mentoring, for example, or 'laddering' from job to job—to prepare Aboriginal people in the community to qualify for admission to Faculties of Education.

iv. That a program be devised which would enable Aboriginal people now working as teaching assistants to earn credits toward a Bachelor of Education degree based on their work in classrooms as teaching assistants. This would shorten the time during which classes would have to be taken at the Faculties of Education at the University of Manitoba or the University of Winnipeg, and would be likely to increase the number of Aboriginal people who would seek to graduate as teachers.

RECOMMENDATION #3: The Training of Teachers

We recommend:

a. That the provincial government make available to the Faculties of Education at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg sufficient additional, targeted funding to enable those faculties to make the changes in their course offerings and the additions to their staff that are necessary for the specific purpose of ensuring that all prospective teachers who are trained in Manitoba are familiar with the colonial experience of Aboriginal people in Canada.

b. That the funding be targeted in such a way as to enable the Faculties of Education to do, at a minimum, the following:

i. To hire additional staff to teach courses in Aboriginal history, culture and spirituality, and in colonialism and racism, with the very strong preference that these additional staff members be Aboriginal people.

ii. To design courses in Aboriginal history, culture and spirituality, and in colonialism and racism, and in anti-racist education.

c. That all prospective teachers seeking certification to teach in Manitoba be required to have taken at least one course in the Faculty of Education with specifically Aboriginal content, as recommended by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

d. That targeted funding be made available to all Manitoba school divisions specifically to enable them to provide a wide variety of professional development opportunities for existing teachers to become more aware of Aboriginal issues.

RECOMMENDATION #4: The High School Curriculum

We recommend:

a. That the high school curriculum in Manitoba, and in particular in those school divisions with a significant Aboriginal student population, be thoroughly revamped in a way consistent with the recommendation of the Aboriginal Teachers Circle: "The total integration of Aboriginal perspectives in all areas of the curriculum" (Fitznor, 1997).

b. That this include at least the following:

i. Significant changes to the English, Social Studies and Science curriculums such that Aboriginal content be totally integrated, and such that the use of Aboriginal content be mandatory for teachers rather than optional as is now the case.

ii. The addition of more courses with specifically Aboriginal content: Aboriginal History, Aboriginal Culture, Aboriginal Literature, and Aboriginal People and the Colonial Experience, for example.

iii. The development of Elders-in-the-schools programs in those schools with significant numbers of Aboriginal students.

iv. The development of Aboriginal artists-in-the-schools programs in those schools with significant numbers of Aboriginal students.

v. The development of anti-racist courses.

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